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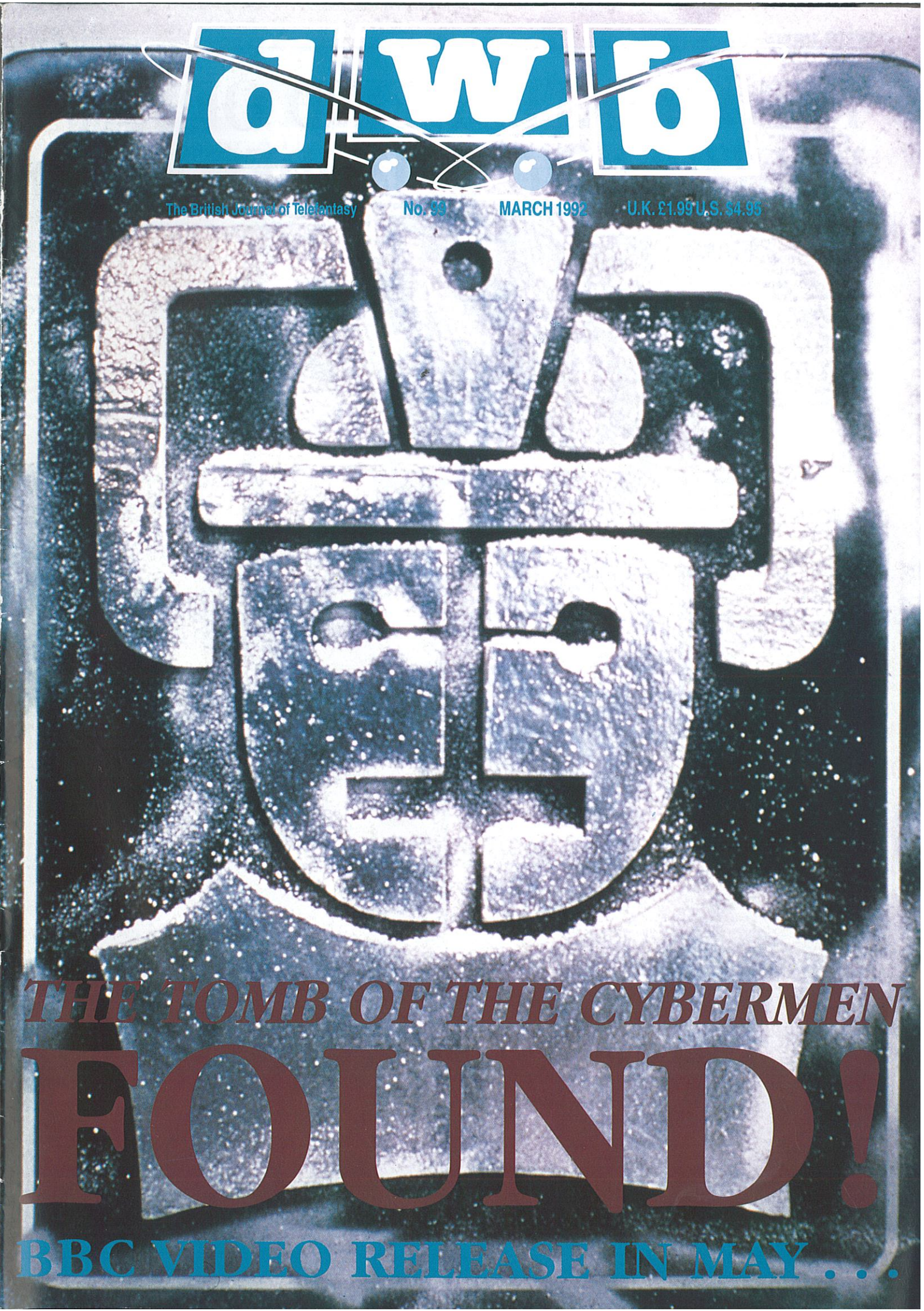


THE TOMB OF THE CYBERMEN

FOUND!

BBC VIDEO RELEASE IN MAY . . .

THE GREATEST FIND OF LOST *DOCTOR WHO* EPISODES *EVER!*

IN WHAT IS already being hailed as the greatest find of lost 'Doctor Who' episodes ever, all four parts of 'Tomb of the Cybermen' have been located and returned to BBC Enterprises. And the best news of all is: you'll be able to watch it all in the comfort of your own home from May.

The sensational news of this discovery was finally confirmed by Archive Librarian Adam Lee on January 20th, ending weeks of speculation about the contents of a whole consignment of old film reels known to be on their way back to London from Hong Kong.

Long-time episode hunter Ian Levine described as "Over the Moon" his feelings about the recovery. "Of all the stories we ever hoped to find", he said, "**Tomb of the Cybermen** was always top of the list. We all hoped, one day, to find perhaps one episode, but to get all four back at once - it's just a dream come true!"

PRISTINE CONDITION

Neither is this fever of excitement confined just to the world of fandom. BBC Enterprises, to whom the episodes technically belong since they originally sold the prints to Hong Kong back in the sixties, has been a hive of activity since it was established beyond doubt that the episodes were all in English, and in pristine condition. BBC Video are on course, clearances pending, to release the story in May in what they see as potentially the biggest-selling **Doctor Who** video of all time.

However, in what can clearly be interpreted as a case of internal politics, BBC Enterprises had reportedly intended to hold news of the find until episode one of **The Mind Robber** was up and airing - to prevent the Late Show team from laying any claim to **Tomb of the Cybermen** as a last-minute replacement. But the news was leaked by John Nathan-Turner to John Freeman of DWM after he had requested a copy supposedly to assist his research for the forthcoming Cybermen tape (see opposite). The only other copy which exists in addition to the original - which currently resides under lock and key in the offices of Home Video Producer David Jackson - is a master-print run off for Home Video under tight security.

CONSISTENT POLL-TOPPER

Not since **The Dominators** and

The War Games were discovered at the National Film Archive in the late seventies has a full Troughton serial turned up. There are still over a dozen William Hartnell stories left to release on video, but after last year no further Troughtons were possible - until now. Well aware of the popularity of **Tomb of the Cybermen** - always a consistent poll-topper in any **Doctor Who** survey - David Jackson's team are pulling out all the stops to get this **Doctor Who** masterpiece into the shops by late Spring.

In the meantime suggestions have been made to the National Film Theatre with a view to coming to an arrangement with BBC Enterprises for an official "première" screening in NFT1, as occurred in Autumn 1988 when **The Ice Warriors** episodes were found and shown to a capacity audience. Such a screening would also provide an ideal venue for a press launch which, if held on the eve of the tape's release, would certainly boost sales still further.

One question mark still unresolved is the future of the planned audio cassette release of **Tomb of the Cybermen** in July, narrated by Jon Pertwee. No decision has yet been made as to whether or not the "talking book" version will still go ahead, but Sue Anstruther would do well to bare in mind Pickwick's **State of Decay** "talking book", which sold fairly well in the eighties

110 EPISODES TO GO...

Recovery of **Tomb of the Cybermen** actually began late last year when a TV distribution company based in the Far East contacted the BBC to enquire whether they wanted back any of their old, out-of-time programme material from the years 1966-69. All the material was contractually unrepeatable but was still being held at the company's premises in Hong Kong. A list detailing the stock was faxed to the BBC's Film Library, in which appeared the entry "4 x DR WHO 25 min episodes".

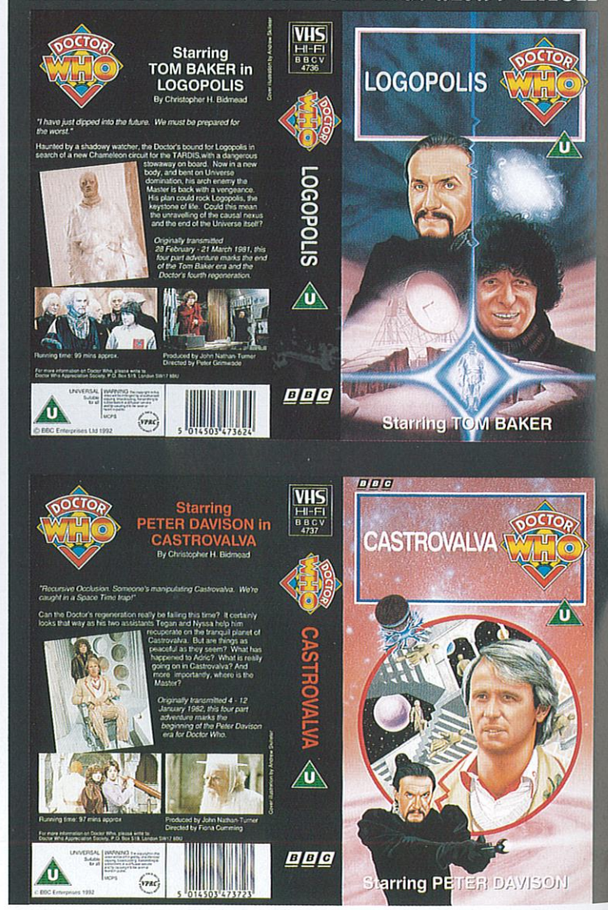
When the episodes finally arrived by sea at Woodlands, home of BBC Enterprises, on January 8th, it was discovered that the material contained were all four episodes of **Tomb of the Cybermen** - last shown in Hong Kong in January 1970. In a deliberate ploy reportedly designed to put the Late Show team off the scent, a cover story was put out that the episodes found were **An Unearthly Child**, which came as a particular blow to those fans "in the know" hoping for the recovery of at least one missing episode!

Relationships between the BBC and this, so-far un-named, TV company in Asia have not, apparently, been very good in the past; a possible reason why they did not respond to the Corporation's telegrammed pleas for information on stock held in 1984 - following the discovery of missing **Doctor Who** episodes from Nigeria (ref: DWB#s 14 and 15). It is therefore not clear whether any more lost BBC material from the sixties and seventies still exists in other offices. But after this major return of vintage drama, documentary and comedy, closer contact is actively being sought.

The return of these four film reels brings the episode count of lost **Doctor Whos** dramatically down to 110. So, with several TV stations in Hong Kong still to be searched, the quest for more finds is continuing with renewed vigour.

J.Jeremy Bentham

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2nd. £10.99 EACH



THE DISCOVERY of 'Tomb of the Cybermen', coupled with Eric Saward's reticence over his post-'Earthshock'-scripted stories, has led to a revised schedule of releases for the rest of 1992, as follows:

May: The Claws of Axos
The Aztecs*
The Tomb of the Cybermen

Jul: The Tom Baker Special
The Pertwee Years
Dr Who Special 1: The Daleks
Dr Who Special 2: The Cybermen

Sep: Image of the Fendahl
Earthshock

Nov: Mawdryn Undead
Vengeance on Varos (4 ep' version)

*The Aztecs will only be available from branches of Woolworths to tie-in with a special promotion.

The Dalek tape (see last issue) will be hosted by Colin Baker, with Peter Davison presenting the Cybermen tape which will comprise the episodes **The Moonbase** 4, **The Wheel in Space** 3 and **The Invasion** 8.

JNT's plan to release extended versions of **Delta and the Bannermen** and **The Happiness Patrol** appear to have been put on hold for the time being, which will undoubtedly come as a relief to most fans.

Finally, a reminder that the episodes comprising **The Pertwee Years** tape are **Inferno** 7, **The Daemons** 5 and **Frontier in Space** 6, combined with rare clips including Pertwee's 1973 Blue Peter appearance to introduce the Whomobile and the unused 'Count Dracula'-like title sequence.

THEY *HAVE* SURVIVED!

A PERSONAL COMMENTARY BY J. JEREMY BENTHAM

I'M STILL REELING a little bit from the phone call on my birthday.

"Tomb of the Cybermen has been recovered," the voice on the other end of the line said. Not just the mythical part 3, he went on, nor even one or more of the other three episodes come to that, but **the whole damn thing**, and all in one mighty swoop!

Naturally it was not the first time in sixteen years that I had heard this particular line of rhetoric. Stories of discovered episodes of **Tomb of the Cybermen** tend to surface at roughly the same time each year that newspapers print articles purporting to have found Lord Lucan. In both cases the level of reported truth ultimately proves inversely proportional to the vigour of their reporters.

This time was different, however. Not some clone of The Late Show's infamous "Brummie in an anorak" telling me that his sister used to go out with a jockey whose pal had a cousin who swears he saw **Tomb of the Cybermen** recently on Jordanian Television while on holiday in Israel, etc. etc. This was the trusted voice of Auntie BBC herself stating a plain and simple fact: All of **Tomb of the Cybermen** had been returned from a TV company in Hong Kong.

Not only that, but come the merry month of May, I'd be able to walk into London's Virgin Megastore or to any branch of Smith's and see whole stacks of **Tomb of the Cybermen** videos on sale plus, one might hope, a chart showing it to be the top-selling sell-through videotape in Great Britain.

To coin the phrase of a fellow episode hunter, it is a dream come true - almost an apotheosis in fact. After so many years of searching, the last three of which have yielded no finds whatsoever, to suddenly see recovered every episode of the most sought-after story of all is to have scaled the summit of the episode hunt pyramid.

What makes it so especially rewarding is that not only have the episodes gone back to the BBC, but they are also - courtesy of BBC Enterprises - going to be turned around and made available to every fan in the country who wants his or her own copy.

The only fly in the ointment is that the BBC does not plan to release a version on NTSC 525-line video, so us fifty or so folk who vote "gone-forever" stories like **Tomb of the Cybermen** into top places in zine surveys will not get the chance to prove to North American readers like Bryan Jenner in Canada (ref: DWB#98) that the mid-Troughton era really did mark an apex in the show's history we have seldom seen matched or surpassed since.

For me, the decision by BBC Enterprises to get **Tomb of the Cybermen** out onto video is as important as the find itself. This is what the whole recovery process should be about; locating episodes and returning them to the BBC so that whole stories can be ultimately assembled and released on commercial VT to new (and "old"...) generations of fans and viewers. By such deeds, everyone benefits. BBC Enterprises makes a profit (well, that **is** what they're there to do), BBC Television gets its programme back, fans can build up their own collections, and even the people who made the shows in the first place can see their art being appreciated anew.

This latter aspect is perhaps the only sad aspect of the whole affair. Gerry Davis, who 'co-wrote' **Tomb of the Cybermen,** died just four months before news of the milestone find broke. Of all the writing Davis ever did for **Doctor Who,** he always regarded **Tomb of the Cybermen** as his best work, bemoaning constantly the short-sightedness of the BBC for destroying their prints in the seventies. How wonderful it would have been to have invited him as a guest of honour at a venue like the NFT to relive among an audience of fellow enthusiasts this masterpiece of television production.

And make no mistake, **Tomb of the Cybermen is** a masterpiece - one of the dozen or so serials that ranks even above the status of "classic story". In many ways it is the perfect **Doctor Who** template: a small, isolated group of humans trapped in an alien environment, while all around them the dark and monstrous forces of evil gather their strength, preparing to attack; it's also the perfect Dennis Spooner "writer's W" story, with peaks of action and excitement alternating all the way through with troughs of dialogue and plot development (i.e. one moment the Doctor is explaining to Victoria about the great privilege they enjoy, being able to travel in Time and Space, and in the next they are facing a horde of attacking Cybermats in one of the story's high-point action scenes); it's pure **Doctor Who** meets Hammer Films and rarely, if ever, have the Cybermen and their technology been as frightening or more powerful. Remember, too, Toberman's foam-splashed disembowelling of a Cyberman. In the days when BBC chiefs weren't afraid to confront their critics about **Doctor Who,** that scene alone on the vox-pop show Talk Back earned the Corporation a hammering from worried parents, anxious that their children suffered nightmares as a result of watching such graphically portrayed body-horror.

Then there are the big questions to face in the wake of this retrieval. Is there any more where these episodes came from? And, if so, would lesser ranked stories like **Reign of Terror** or **The Tenth Planet** get turned around as fast onto commercial video?

The answer to the first one is, possibly. This is not just wishful thinking. There is evidence from Cyprus Television that, during the Turkish invasion of 1974 - when their prints of parts four and five of **Reign of Terror** were destroyed in the gutting of an eastern point TV broadcasting station - a lot of BBC material was hurriedly sent to Rediffusion TV in Hong Kong as part of the system of rotating syndicated shows, technically termed as "cycling". This material happened to include all seven episodes of **Marco Polo...**

As for turnaround, a lot depends on what, if anything, gets found. David Jackson of BBC Home Video does take note of survey results published in magazines such as DWM and DWB, and it is a factor applied to the equation of what gets released when. Any Cyberman or Dalek episodes that complete a story are guaranteed to get released faster than, say, a Hartnell historical; particularly if the material is from the Troughton era or completes, in PAL colour, Pertwee stories that exist solely or partly in monochrome.

A big deciding element is likely to be how well **Tomb of the Cybermen** sells. If nothing else the demographic experts at BBC Enterprises will get an ideal opportunity to assess the buying potential represented by "the Fan Factor". It's one thing to sell **The Krotons** to the general public plus **some** of the fans, it's quite another to sell **Tomb of the Cybermen** to the general public, plus just about **all** the fans.

I know I'm going to be there shopping for my copy on Day One. And I've a sneaking feeling there's going to be quite a queue...

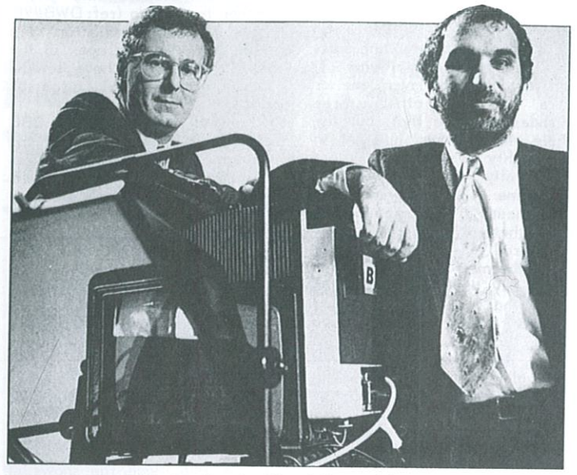
POWELL UNDER PRESSURE: YENTOB, MILNE SPEAK OUT

"SCIENCE FICTION, not everybody's cup of tea, but does that mean it should be banished from our screens?"

So commented presenter Sheena McDonald as she presented the January 25th edition of Channel 4's Right To Reply, succinctly summarising the question many viewers have been asking themselves. In marked contrast to the BBC's toothless Bite Back, Right To Reply allowed viewer Judy Moore to highlight the current plight of science fiction fans and obtained comments from BBC2 Controller Alan Yentob which come astonishingly close to criticising his BBC1 colleague Jonathan Powell.

Judy Moore's report began with the comments of science fiction writer Anne Gay, who described the potential of the genre. Remarking that British TV moguls seem to disagree, Judy Moore explained that the BBC's last new science fiction drama, **Star Cops**, was made in the mid eighties and ended after one season. Turning to **Blake's 7**, a series of clips from **Rumours of Death** introduced Jaqueline Pearce and Chris Boucher, who gave their reasons for the series' continued popularity. Chris Boucher than explained that science fiction depended on good, idea-based plots into which strong characters could be added, and expressed the fear that the less science fiction was produced, the less demand there would be. He pointed out that **Red Dwarf**, while marvellous, was transmitted as comedy, not science fiction.

Explaining that **Red Dwarf** was now the BBC's only adult science fiction series, Judy Moore gave viewers a tour of the BBC's past triumphs, including **Quatermass, Doomwatch** and **Doctor Who**, "now re-running on BBC2." Asked if the BBC felt there wasn't an audience for science fiction, Alan Yentob replied, "There's a big audience out there, certainly in terms of the minority channels, but a comparatively big audience out there who are interested in science fiction." Judy Moore then asked whether that audience was being well served by the BBC, and received the reply, "I would emphasize that it's being spoilt to bits by BBC2 at the moment in terms of the classic American series which are on. In terms of new drama, no. Except for **Red Dwarf**, there isn't any." Asked if BBC2 would be willing to fill this gap, Yentob said, "Recently I've been saying that I'd like to see what might be around, what kind of ideas there might be which could emerge which seemed appropriate for BBC2. That's not a guarantee that it will happen, because in the end you get a number of choices and you have to decide which ones you're going to take, but I am prepared to look and see what there is."



CONFLICT OF INTERESTS: Jonathan Powell and Alan Yentob

Pressed further, he added, "Well, it would be within the BBC, but I am prepared to consider 'fostering ideas'. I'm not prepared to guarantee here and now that I'm definitely going to do a science fiction series, but it's certainly a proposition I wouldn't reject. We will take steps to get some material in that area."

Judy Moore concluded by commenting that now would be the time for writers to send "our friendly TV mogul" good science fiction scripts which could be produced on a shoestring budget.

Alan Yentob's statement that he is looking for science fiction ideas is very welcome news. It has been taken in some quarters that he is considering a revival of **Doctor Who** if the overall repeat season proves successful. While some fans might view his attempts to hedge his bets with disappointment or even suspicion, he has in fact given the strongest commitment that could reasonably be expected considering the other factors involved.

CREGEEN'S INFLUENCE?

Prolific TV science fiction writer Chris Boucher reportedly commented some years ago that the decision to cancel **Star Cops** was taken not by the Controller of BBC2, but by the Drama Department (then headed by Jonathan Powell) who were "unhappy with it and unwilling to offer it for a second season." If so, Alan Yentob will be able to schedule home-produced science fiction only if the Drama Department is willing to produce it. If Yentob is interested in taking on **Doctor Who**, the next year should show whether Peter Cregeen genuinely wants to "take **Doctor Who** through the nineties", or whether he is Jonathan Powell's willing accomplice in keeping science fiction off our screens.

That Yentob, rather than Powell, appeared on Right To Reply, represents a classic admission by the BBC that there's currently no place on BBC1 for science fiction, despite Powell's claim on last month's See For Yourself that his channel caters for all interests and minority groups. It is also worth wondering whether Powell's reported anger at the current **Doctor Who** repeats contributed to Yentob's willingness to criticise, even by implication, his colleague's policies.

EX-D.G. HITS OUT

Meanwhile, Powell has come under attack from other influential quarters. In The Serial Killers - the second article of a four-part series run by The Guardian - the former BBC Director General, Alasdair Milne, criticised BBC1's current performance and attitudes in terms similar to recent DWBs. Milne ran the BBC from 1982 to 1987 when he was sacked, effectively on Government orders, after a series of crises which included (by his own account) the original "cancellation" of **Doctor Who** and, more damagingly, relentless allegations of political bias from Conservative central office. Criticising D.G. elect, John Birt's, over-emphasis on news and current affairs and neglect of entertainment programming, Milne claims that comedy and drama were the mainstays of BBC1, explaining that commissioning was the key function of the channel Controller. Milne commented on the current weakness of BBC1's drama series and stated that, "Something has gone wrong with the television service's commissioning."

BBC1 RATINGS STILL POOR

As predicted by ITV chiefs in November, BBC1 won a resounding victory in the Christmas ratings battle, but despite Jonathan Powell's attempts to make capital from this affair, BBC1's performance was surprisingly disappointing in places (Miss Marple held only 12 of the 19 million viewers it inherited from Auntie's Bloomers), and the new year has seen the channel fall behind again, winning only 34% of the audience compared with ITV's 41%. With several of ITV's strongest serials still to return at the time of writing, this performance seems unlikely to improve in the coming weeks.

With Powell's schedules continuing to fail, and influential voices both within the BBC and elsewhere in the television industry beginning to speak out, a backlash seems to be building against BBC1's current self-destructive policies which can only benefit drama in general and science fiction in particular...

Anthony Brown

LATE SHOW RATINGS "RESPECTABLE"

THE LATE SHOW TEAM have described as "respectable" the viewing figures for the first three weeks of the new 'Doctor Who' repeat season.

Resistance is Useless, the 'documentary' which spearheaded the run, came 5th in order of most watched BBC2 programmes in the week of its transmission with 3.51 million viewers, with **The Time Meddler** 1 in 15th position with 2.37m. This compares with 5.38m for **Thunderbirds** which came second, indicating that **Doctor Who** lost a large proportion of the under-12 audience many of whom, it can be assumed, were 'ordered to bed'.

With the Coronation Street factor out of the way by the following week, episode 2 increased its audience share to 2.79m, although falling to 21st place (though it should be noted that this was amongst a whole host of other shows clustered around this figure, and even an extra 100,000 viewers would have improved its position markedly).

Episode 3 recorded 2.58m, shooting back up to number 13, and a surfeit of publicity for the final episode and **The Mind Robber** 1 is expected to boost the season.

An unexpected bonus has been appearing at the end of each episode, namely an impressive plug for the BBC Video range with a voice-over by Tom Baker.

'SEA DEVILS' FAVOURITES

As we go to press there is no confirmation of which story will be representing Jon Pertwee, though if a six-week slot can be obtained then it will be **The Sea Devils** - a story often cited by the public as one they remember well. A five-week slot would guarantee **The Daemons**, but if only four are available then the field is still wide open...

BRIEFLY...

MORE THAT A MESSIAH, the follow up to the BBC Film Club's 'Summoned by Shadows', commenced production just before Christmas. Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant reprise their rôles of The Stranger and Miss Brown, and the cast also includes Sophie Aldred (as we have never seen her before...), Peter Miles and Barbara Shelley, who played Sorasta in 'Planet of Fire'.

Location shooting took place in Wiltshire, the Sussex Coast and Derbyshire, and the play is based upon an Audio-Visuals production written by Nigel Fairs (see page 12), who says: "The original play was released in 1986 and this time round there are still lots of 'Doctor Who' connections for people to look for."

The new title should be available from the end of February.

THE BBC's costume Warehouse in North Acton Lane played host to a huge auction on January 24th. Staged by Bonhams, the number of lots involved - comprising of costumes from a multitude of old BBC programmes - proved too great to be held at the Knightsbridge auction house. There were more lots from 'Doctor Who', including Thal space suits from 'Planet of the Daleks', Mr. Fibuli's uniform from 'The Pirate Planet', Soldeed's costume from 'The Horns of Nimon', two Gundan helmets from 'Warriors' Gate', Vanir helmets from 'Terminus' and Salateen's suit from 'The Caves of Androzani'. A Krarg from 'Shada' was mysteriously removed prior to the auction...

TOMB LATEST: Shirley Cooklin, who played Kaftan, is hinting that she might hold BBC Video to ransom before giving clearance for the tape's release. Since turning to writing, she has become a distinguished and award-winning writer for Radio 4, and is not altogether delighted at TOMB's re-emergence. So far BBC Video has made two offers, but she told us: "I haven't given my permission yet - and they can't release it until I do." However, a recent agreement with Equity came into force making it impossible for one actor to block the transmission of a repeat, such as in the case of Martin Shaw and The Professionals, though whether this ruling can also be applied to videos remains to be seen. Shirley Cooklin was cast by then 'Doctor Who' producer Peter Bryant, her husband at the time.

Andrew Skilleter has won the covetted commission to provide the jacket artwork for the May release.

LATEST CASUALTIES among US PBS stations dropping 'Doctor Who' from their schedules are KRMA-Denver and KLRN-San Antonio, both citing the high price tag being demanded by Lionheart and many viewers not honouring their pledges.

Some relief to US fans is the release in February of 'The Hartnell Years', 'The Troughton Years', the extended 'The Curse of Fenric', 'The Three Doctors', 'An Unearthly Child' and 'The War Games' videos. The latter is available as a two-pack, but retailing for only $29.98 - just $10 over the regular price.

BEWARE adverts that appear under the 'Video Tapes-Features' heading in Exchange & Mart. A recent ad offered 'Tomb of the Cybermen' in exchange for other 'missing' episodes. Almost the same as saying "I'd willingly swap my 'Time and the Rani' for a copy of 'The Macra Terror'"! If you're still interested, why not give this Darren person a call on (0253) 595300 and let him know just what you think of his offer - and where he can stick it!

VISUAL EFFECTS ON THE SMALL SCREEN is a special event being held at MOMI on March 4th introduced by Mat Irvine, and this is followed up a week later with 'The Radiophonic Workshop', introduced by Dick Mills.

ALEXANDRA LOOSELEY of Who Shop International has been served a court order over the non-payment of a delivery of sculptured figures by Philip Robinson (ref:DWB#95).

ADDITIONS TO THE DEATH OF YESTERDAY

Daniel O'Mahony, Hampshire (1-1-92)

CONGRATULATIONS on DWB#97, **easily the best issue of 1991.**

The articles were consistently good. The Movie Synopsis was fascinating, though I'll be ecstatic if this travesty never gets to a studio. The **Blake's 7** terrorism article was excellent - it was these sorts of concepts that raised the series out of the action-adventure pit that it's so easy to consign it to - certainly you don't get these sort of concerns in the likes of V. The **Dan Dare** piece criminally failed to mention the Grant Morrison/Rian Hughes version in **Revolver: I killed children...and the lesson I learned was that it's easy**". Far better than the wimpy stuff in the 'revamped' Eagle!

What really made DWB#97 for me was the **Return of the Cybermen** script and the Death of Yesterday article. Gerry Davis' script should never have become the awful **Revenge.** It's odd, **Return** would probably have been more expensive than the cheapo final version, yet it's the increase in the budget cited as reason for the rewrite!

Seriously, the "missing stories" of **Doctor Who** is a subject which fascinates me, and at last, Anthony Brown has provided the near definitive guide. Obviously such articles can never be complete (I notice no mentions for many of the names which appear on the scripts list in DWB#93), but it was very thorough. Just for the record, I've compiled a list of some omissions based on information from various sources, not least an excellent article in a similar vein from TimeScreen.

The Hartnell years are covered very well, the only real omissions being some story ideas. David Whitaker devised a few unused storylines for the first season, including one in which the TARDIS landed on the dying planet Mars. Also unmentioned is William Hartnell's notorious suggestion for "The Son of Doctor Who" (well, you mentioned The Face of God...). **The Dalek Invasion of Earth** may have been commissioned rather hastily following the success of **The Daleks** to end the first season. In that case, the intended six-part climax must have been dropped (don't get too excited, it was probably The Web Planet). The original **Celestial Toymaker** apparently had both Toymaker and Trilogic Game in it - it would have been interesting to see how George and Margaret would have coped...

The Troughton years. Barry Letts plied the production office with scripts and storylines during this period, and it is unlikely that none of these were ever used when Letts came to power (as it were). One of these suggestions concerns a creature that evolves through various ugly stages before becoming a beautiful, God-like creature - possibly the seeds of **The Mutants.**

Season 4: Unmentioned was Victor Pemberton's The Eye in Space, about an eye in space (surprise, surprise) which attracts objects to it, including the TARDIS (this may be confused with Geoffrey Orme's The Evil Eye). Another lost script of the season concerned a space station under attack (possibly the mentioned Prison in Space?), while the writer of the comedy script may have been Dick Vosburgh. Peter Ling's reverse-time idea is interesting since it resembles the TV Comic story in issues 713-715 and, more recently, **Red Dwarf**'s awful **Backwards.**

The Pertwee years. Martin Worth, a writer on **Doomwatch**, had a script (about Triffid-like plants) considered for Season 9, rejected only on technical grounds. An alternative **Planet of the Spiders**, with Roger Delgado as the Master, may have passed storyline stage. This was probably set on Gallifrey, sans spiders! Could The Daleks in London be the script for **Day of the Daleks'** trailers? Speaking of **Day**, you didn't mention The Time Warriors...

The Tom Baker years. The Holmes era is interesting not so much for rejected scripts, but that unworkable scripts were retained and rewritten into extinction; a demonstration of Holmes' professionalism and perfectionism - **The Ark in Space, Genesis of the Daleks** (possibly), **The Pyramids of Mars** (the original, according to TimeScreen, had the Mummies searching the British Museum for the secret of wild rice to sell to the Martians. It's true!), etc. All classics, the only exception being **Revenge of the Cybermen.** Jon Pertwee and Reed (**The Gunfighters**) de Rouen apparently submitted a script for Season 12, but which was probably never considered. Robert Banks Stewart was to write the Season 14 six-parter. How far he got with it, who knows, but he is credited as writer for **The Talons of Weng-Chiang**, its eventual replacement, in BBC documentation. **The Seeds of Doom** probably did start life as a six-parter and was cut to a four-parter, possibly to accommodate Eric Pringle's The Angurth. When this fell through, Holmes and Douglas Camfield wrote a two-part intro to the main story-line instead. Possibly.

As well as The Witchlords and The Killer Cats of Ginseng, Season 15 also lost The Island of Fandor by Chris Boucher, with **Image of the Fendahl** a rush replacement. (Just speculating, imagine the sort of story you'd get by combining Killer Cats and **Survival...**). We also seem to have lost an Anthony Read historical in which the Doctor discovers that Robin Hood was the bad guy, and Robert Holmes' cannibals-harvesting-the-human-race tale (perhaps Holmes saw the script for **Quatermass** which was kicking around the BBC at the time he was **Doctor Who** script editor). Douglas Adams devised a storyline in which the Doctor decides to give up fighting evil and retire, which Graham Williams considered to be **too** silly...

Christopher Priest's Sealed Orders is probably the most fascinating of all the rejected storylines, not least because of rumours that it was rejected because it was too perverse... It might be worth doing an Operation Werewolf type feature on the story. "Priest...'fell out with the producer'" did he? You do surprise me!

Mention of John Brosnan also surprised me - especially since he claims to loathe **Doctor Who**! Unmentioned went City of the Damned by John Wagner (presumably based on the comic strip in DWW 9-16) -

I also notice (in DWB#93) that Wagner and Pat Mills collaborated on a script together in the early eighties. What is it, since both City of the Damned or The Space Whale were both solo efforts?

Like Holmes and, to a certain extent, Eric Saward, Christopher Bidmead seems to have spent most of his time rewriting the scripts commissioned during his tenure, so perhaps honourable mention should be made to the drastically revised **The Leisure Hive, Full Circle, Warriors' Gate** and **The Keeper of Traken.** They're all good stories so, like Holmes, he must have been doing something right!

Presumably it was in the wake of **Earthshock** that the three Cybermen scripts mentioned in the Cyberbook were in the offing - namely Hydrogratz, Dark Labyrinth (set in Ancient Crete with the Master) and Wargame (also with the Daleks - can it possibly be the Eric Pringle script which became **The Awakening**?). I also remember an ancient DWM reference to Incident on Zeta Minor, the originally planned Davison opener by John Flanagan and Andrew McCulloch with the Master (any relation to Zeta Plus One or, indded, **Planet of Evil**?).

Robert Holmes wrote a storyline for the 20th anniversary story, sans the multitude of elements which would make it the carnival JNT wanted, so it was rejected. Combined with the cannibalism script mentioned above, perhaps this storyline was to become The **Two Doctors**?

Genesis of the Cybermen by Gerry Davis popped up during the Davison era, rejected by Eric Saward for reasons outlined in his 1988 interview with DWB (ref: #s 57/58). The storyline has been printed in the Cyberbook, and it's sad to say that it stinks and Saward was right to reject it.

Season 22 is a tough one, since virtually all the scripts were overworked and rewritten by Saward. Conquest of the Daleks lost the Daleks and became **Timelash** when Saward decided to write the Dalek story himself (**Timelash** with the Daleks? Almost as ludicrous as **The Awakening** with the Daleks!).

Steve Rogers, Suffolk (3-1-92)

The highlight of DWB#97 has to be **Return of the Cybermen.** Excellent!! It's a pity we will never know why Robert Holmes decided it needed changing so much. It may never have been a classic, but I think it would have been better than what we ended up with.

Also of interest were the **Blake's 7** Series Survey Results. But why get Peter Linford to do this when he clearly didn't want to?!

I **Have** decided, come pay day (January 25th) that my £10 cheque will be in the post, but I'm not wasting paper and ink on pointless letter-writing campaigns because I don't believe they've achieved anything so far and won't in the future either. No mention on Points of View or in the Radio Times proves this.

Having said that, I have written to Alan Yentob thanking him. There's too much I want in this world and not enough gratitude.

A.J.Laignel, Jersey (23-1-92)

I hope that everybody who has written complaining to the BBC (quite rightly!) will >

also write to Alan Yentob to thank him for the repeats. When somebody has made a positive move they should be made aware of our gratitude in an equal amount to the complaints. A little politeness may go a long way!

Robert Stuart, Strathclyde (6-1-92)
The DWB Winter Special was excellent, but as the "British Journal of Telefantasy" I think you show very little respect to the great series **Blake's 7**. The contents page gave the impression of a two-page interview with Michael Keating which, upon turning to page 20, turned out to be barely two columns, and that included two photos! Also, having the results of the **Blake** poll tabulated and presented by someone who is clearly not a really big fan of the programme was quite a sad thing to see in such a professional magazine. Even the **Blake** video reviews always seem to be crushed into as small a space as possible. I know DWB is not a **Blake's 7** magazine,but I think a little more care could be taken with its representation. Incidentally I was quite staggered to see **City at the Edge of the World** and **Death Watch** outside the top ten; in fact outside the top twenty! I'm sure the popularity of these episodes will increase when they are released on video.

I think that the rewriting of **Return of the Cybermen** improved it immensely! Do you have any plans to print more original scripts (i.e. if possible the Auton story from the original Season 23?).

I see that the BBC are releasing **Doctor Who** audio stories which are being provided by **the fans**. They have got a nerve! No new series for three years, and now they're going to be making money on material which they junked from their own bloody archives! It would be nice if they were released on CD, with separate tracks for each episode, but I doubt it...

ED: While many 'unused' stories never got beyond plot treatment stage, such as Robert Holmes' third Auton adventure, some did, and we hope to present a serialisation of perhaps the most interesting of these later in the year....

Bob Schaefer, Jr., Texas, USA (9-1-92)
Thanks for the interview with Anthony Ainley in DWB#97. I've met him at two conventions here in Texas and found him to be very nice and approachable (although perhaps a bit flirtatious towards the opposite sex!). One thing that I have noticed about him is that he seems to be the sort of actor who really doesn't get too involved with the character that he's playing and just tends to learn the lines and do what the director says, and I've always felt that his portrayal of the Master would have been stronger if he had tried to develop the character. He says "'More steel' was another of [the producer's] favourite notes. 'More subtlety' was not something I ever heard, which I found puzzling". However, did he ever bring that up with the director or the production office? Did he ever try to inject more subtlety? No offence to Mr. Ainley, but he seems to be only as good as his material, and it shows if you review his stories.

The Return of the Cybermen script is something I have wanted to see ever since I heard about it. It was quite a coup to get it. Very interesting, and much better than the final version.

I really liked the back cover and always enjoy seeing the new book and video covers in full colour. Keep this up!

Andy McKinney, Kentucky, USA (30-12-91)
With all the delays, I'm beginning to believe that the Coast to Coast (aka Green Light) people are in charge of the Sci-Fi Channel. What is it with these people?

Stephen Cole, Bedford (6-1-92)
Whilst I am used to living on the cutting edge of **Who**-controversy (I shared student lodgings with Duncan Harvey last year!), it was nice to be able to slip gently back into nostalgia while reading David Gibbs' review of **Logopolis** in DWB#97. I was only ten in 1981, but share many of his feelings about that story, the intangible sense of greatness and foreboding that permeates it to make it such a wonderful tale (I notice David makes no comment on the Doctor's plan to "flush out" the Master by landing underwater - very wise, very wise...).

He is also accurate in his point that a video of **Logopolis** is essential. My family got a video recorder just in time for me to tape **The Leisure Hive**, but with a blank tape at a tenner a time, my pocket money wouldn't stretch to accommodate 28 episodes!

The rest of the issue was entertainingly informative as usual, particularly Anthony Brown's articles on the unused episodes and the Honor Blackman years of **The Avengers** - although I would take issue with him on **A Sense of History** being a boring episode; it's far better than cadaverous efforts such as **Two's a Crowd** or **Dial a Deadly Number** in that season.

GET REAL, IAN!

Nick Cooper, Leeds (22-1-92)
Tim Munro seems to have stirred up quite a nest of hornets, judging from DWB#97 and 98's letters pages, but does Ian Levine **really** believe that the initial crap response to the Save **Who** campaign was all down to Tim's article in DWB#96?! Get real, Ian - the reason has probably got more in common with the fact that I have yet to meet **anyone** who is prepared to throw £10+ down the drain. With wads the size of Ian Levine and Andrew Beech's, one wonders how much actual cash they are planning to contribute as it would probably increase the "fighting fund" by more than the proceeds of any draw for any prizes they donate could - perhaps Andrew should buy less costumes at Bonhams this year, or maybe DSL could organise a fund-raising convention? No, perhaps not...

I find it sad that naïve fans like Ian Bridge still labour under the misapprehension that the '85 hiatus was a "cancellation" that "we" reversed, and so drawing a comparison with the very real termination now. The sadness that permeates John Ross's comments is almost as pitiable (both ref: DWB#98). The "hard core" Tim identified - "the Tavern crowd, the A5 fanzine revivalists, (and) the convention regulars" - are having a great time; we've been here for years, and will be for years to come. And we have a sense of proportion, which is more than most of Tim's detractors seem to have.

Do we really need the programme back, anyway? Fans of **The Prisoner** have lasted nearly a quarter-century on just seventeen 50-minute episodes, while the Trekkers managed to wait ten years before their series' first revival without suing anybody! Surely as Who fans we should call it a day and make do with the 26 years we got, with at least the last five on borrowed time. For my part, I have little money to spare as it is, but if I did it would go to Amnesty International or the NCCL - something that **matters**.

Loved Julian Ames' movie "review" (ref: DWB#97), especially his prediction for the 2003 DWAS co-ordinator - Tim denies it, but it could just happen. Maybe.

Tim Munro, Huddersfield (23-1-92)
Until now, I've deliberately kept aloof from the hornet's nest my New Fandom (ref: DWB#96) article seems to have stirred up. However, I feel I must reply to John Ross (letters, DWB#98) and others who have apparently taken offence at my reference to "the Tavern crowd", and who seem to accuse me of membership of some kind of elitist clique. Firstly, those who know me will testify to my abhorrence and denunciation of elitism in any form - indeed, I find the belief that one is a nobody if one does not show one's face at the Fitzroy Tavern in London's Charlotte Street on the first Thursday of each month to be one of the most reprehensible aspects of fandom's upper echelons. Secondly, and this will no doubt surprise Mr. Ross, my relationship with the Tavern crowd can hardly be described as incestuous, since I have never in my life set foot in that famed hostelry. I referred to the Tavern in my article simply because it is one of the foremost bastions of the Active Fandom which I believe to be the form in which **Doctor Who** appreciation will survive. Also, being acquainted with many of those who do attend Taverns, I know them to be good people and committed fans, but also firmly in possession of a sense of proportion - in other words precisely the kind of fans that section of the article was all about. I notice my reference to the A5 fanzine revivalists (surely a far more exclusive grouping than a hundred or so fans who just turn up at a boozer once a month) and the convention regulars doesn't seem to have raised a squeak. I wonder why?

As for Ian bridge, he has missed my whole point. I am emphatically **not** urging fandom to sit on their arses and do nothing. On the contrary, I want them to get up off their arses and start keeping **Doctor Who** alive **for themselves** instead of continually expecting somebody else to do it for them.

Anyway, enough of this. DWB#98 was an excellent issue, the highlight of which was Anthony Brown's brilliant He Who Would Be Grade. I don't think I've ever seen the case against Jonathan Powell put so perceptively, clearly and pointedly. In a way, it's a pity this devastating critique of the man's inadequacies as Controller of BBC1 was printed in DWB, where it was essentially preaching to the converted. It deserves a much wider audience, both inside and outside the television industry, and certainly a copy should be winging its way to the BBC's Board of Governors. This article is precisely the kind of far-sightedness I was calling for when I urged fandom to widen its vision. Anthony's piece may have hardly mentioned **Doctor Who**, but almost all the points he raises are relevant in explaining why the show is no longer in production. Until fandom wakes up to the fact that **Doctor Who**'s problems are just one miniscule part of a malaise affecting the entire BBC, then it's never going to get further than banging its head against a brick wall.

Lastly, a point about 2003: A Space Idiocy. Julian Ames should know there's about as much chance of me becoming Pope as there is of me becoming DWAS co-ordinator, even by 2003. Personally, I think Nick Cooper's a far more likely candidate for the job...ahem.

Mark Kinneley, Derby (17-1-92)
Whilst I would dearly love **Doctor Who** to return to our screens with a new series, I feel quite strongly that the proposed lawsuit is pure folly. The amused attitude of the press to the situation is pure proof that such action will only serve to put fans in both a bad light and further pour ridicule on SF fans in general. Not only this, but the BBC must now think of **Doctor Who** only in tainted terms. The high-minded approach by certain fans, acting through misguided actions, are doing more damage to the series than a certain producer ever did!

I am saddened that many fans will see the action as a 'positive' move and fund this folly purely on the reasons given in the coverage in your magazine.

Fandom has an awful habit of raising the object of its affections to a pedestal and failing to put things into the greater perspective of things. This was brought to mind recently when I discovered what could be the **real** reason why **Doctor Who** has always been made by the BBC Drama Department and not, as one would have expected in the series' early years, by the Children's Department. Looking back to the show's formative years, we discovered that, in January 1963, the BBC disbanded their Children's Department and 'farmed' out its children's output to other relevant departments; thus, Crackerjack was produced by Light Entertainment, Blue Peter by (of all things) the Women's Department, and the Classic Serial by the Drama Department. **Doctor Who** began production shortly after this move and, despite being aimed at children, was allocated to the Drama Department also. **Doctor Who** was originally a children's series. Nuff said. The assumption by high-minded fans in their attempts to clarify their interest in a children's series by calling it a drama series by stating otherwise is somewhat lacking in accuracy on hindsight.

As soon as fandom realises that the final decision on **Doctor Who** lies with the BBC and not them, the better. The last series suffered poor viewing figures and overseas sales have dropped as the series' back catalogue of old episodes has reached saturation point; particularly in the States. I'd guess it was probably the back catalogue that kept the series going so long over there. Likewise, the success of videos, books, comics and the like are measured in thousands. Television audiences are measured in millions. The success of anything in the world of video, books and comics cannot be used as a bench mark in saying that the series is still popular with Joe Public; the figures might be healthy in these fields but it doesn't mean the series' potential audience will also be high.

I will state again that I would love to see **Doctor Who** back in a new series but, putting everything into perspective, the chances of a TV comeback are slim. The sooner fans accept this and leave the decision making to the unbiased professionals in the TV world, the better for us all.

Graham Cluley, Surrey (2-1-92)
I **wonder** what Ian Levine (ref: DWB#97) feels he achieved when he "had his picture in The Sun in 1985 smashing a TV set in protest" to the cancellation? Was he making a valid case for the show's return, or just making himself and the rest of **Doctor Who** fandom look like cranks whose only reason to live was for **their** show?

I've met many **Doctor Who** fans in my time and my greatest disappointment with a sizeable proportion of them has always been their sheer **fanaticism** for the programme. I find it very sad that people can be so obsessed. I would have thought that there were more important things to put money towards than a Save the Doctor campaign. Let's face it, there are enough people homeless on the streets this winter.

Yes, I watch **Doctor Who**. Occasionally I even think it's brilliant. But all things must pass and I think **Doctor Who** has had a better crack at the whip than most. Why not just let it rest in peace? If you're that hooked you can always buy the videos and books. I shouldn't think I will dissuade anyone from supporting the campaign, but that's not the point. Sue the BBC to high heaven if you want to, but try **living** a little too and not taking it too seriously!

Adam Richards, Derby (3-1-92)
No doubt your intentions for the Save the Doctor campaign are entirely admirable, but I must agree with Tim Munro - stunts such as this usually achieve nothing but derision from the BBC and printed media alike. To the Corporation, **Doctor Who** fans must look like a bunch of impatient, unsatisfiable adolescents; we are so fanatical about a TV series that we are willing to embarrass ourselves in a court of law to get "our Doctor" back on the air.

Ian Levine argues that should the case be won, we can have every faith in a new series being worthwhile, but I do not agree. Do you remember what happened last time the programme was "cancelled"? The fans petitioned and the programme did return; only worse than ever. Does Levine forget his scathing attacks on the series post-1985? Do you really expect **Doctor Who** to be produced (or tendered out) successfully by a lot of browned-off TV executives for whom the series will always be an angry, bitter memory?

As for fandom, I think it has actually become more enjoyable now that we no longer have to keep quiet about our appreciation, because we no longer have 14 weeks of disappointing rubbish with a Scottish super-hero who knows everything before it's happened and keeps screaming "Ayyyyyyyyyce!" every five minutes! In fact, I would much rather your devoted your admirable efforts to finding some more missing Troughton stories. Who knows, BBC2 might even show one or two of them if we're lucky...

ED: ...and if BBC Enterprises don't get hold of them first!

Bob Tutnell, Vancouver, Canada (7-1-92)
After reading Mr. Munro's article I must say that I wholeheartedly agree with all of what he says, yet I wholly sympathize with the consortium of fans who are planning to sue the BBC - God knows it's time those complacent BBC bureacrats had a swift kick up their backsides, and I agree that perhaps a public embarrassment of the network might work. But, my confusion lies in that I agree with both sides of this current debate.

I would hate to see anything we do to bring the series back being misinterpreted and thereby jeopardising the chance of it returning, and since reading Mr. Munro's article I have this niggling feeling that perhaps fandom is going about it all wrong. I would like to see the series return, yes, but not because some group or judge has forced the BBC to bring it back when they would really rather not.

Jason A. McLaughlin, Lancashire (22-1-92)
I'd like to thank Ian Levine for putting that terrible article by Tim Munro in its place. Is Munro suffering from insanity at the moment? What with saying we should stop the campaign and suggesting animation as a future for the Doctor!

Marc A. Gillham, Birmingham (5-1-92)
I would like to admit to falling well within the camp of the "apathetic majority". This is the first time that I have written to any fan magazine, and now that I have taken this first step, I fully intend for it not to be the last.

Regardless of your political persuasion within the area of **Who** fandom, it has got to be worth making the effort of reaching into your pocket for a measly £10, which would otherwise be wasted on buying the eagerly awaited release of the extended **Delta and the Bannermen**, God forbid! The worst case outcome of the proposed court action would be a BBC firmly entrenched against the production of any new **Who**, surely not too dissimilar to the situation we have at present. In such a climate of contempt from BBC management, even a bad course of action would be better than taking no action at all. Full support to the committee must be given **now** by all fans while the programme is still fresh in the public mind. Our campaign will, I hope, benefit tremendously from Alan Yentob's courageous decision to broadcast the longest repeat season of **Who** ever seen in this country. My heartfelt congratulations go out to him and his staff at BBC2, who clearly appreciate the true value of a wide range of intelligent programming catering for all tastes. What a good case for telefantasy in general it will make when - and I'm very confident here - **Doctor Who** joins **Thunderbirds, Star Trek: The Next Generation** and **Quantum Leap** in the top ten BBC2 programmes. If it rekindles fond memories in even a tiny proportion of the general viewing public, this can only add to the furtherance of our case.

My opinion of your magazine has increased ten-fold since issue 96 with your publishing of Tim Munro's The New Fandom. What more proof does anybody need that DWB provides the best forum for unbiased and uncensored lively debate? I did not agree with the sentiments expressed, but I applaud the editor's decision to publish the piece in the interests of fair and balanced argument.

John Pettigrew, Fife (23-1-92)
It's all very well to be a content little Tim Munro and accept the end of the show but surely, **surely** this campaign is worth the money and effort? I mean, what's the worse that can happen? You waste £10 and the show doesn't return. £10 lost in an attempt to try and save a show that you allegedly care about. £10 out of your entire life. It's not that much to ask is it? I'm unemployed and try and scrape money together from week to week, but I've entered. For goodness' sake, I'm **Scottish**, but I've entered! Doesn't that embarrass some of you wealthy Southerners? And another thing. Nobody's denying that in the grand scheme of things a charity such as Children in Need is more worthy a cause than the Save the Doctor campaign, but I don't really see the connection between the two. If you feel strongly enough about **Doctor Who** you'll enter the competition and make one last attempt to get the show back, and if it fails - well, you did your bit.

Oh God, I've just read Mr. Munro's latest article, Yabba-Dabba-**Who**! (ref: DWB#98). Sorry, but a cartoon is a cartoon, no matter how well it's done. **Doctor Who** is (or should be) quality science fiction drama on prime time TV. There is prejudice against popular animation and I wouldn't want **Doctor Who** to be used as an experiment. Surely the final nail in the coffin would be as an axed cartoon!

One feature I did enjoy was Anthony Brown's insight into Jonathan Powell, his broadcasting decisions and the second season syndrome. It's amazing to think that the BBC1 Controller can enforce his personal viewing preferences on the nation!

Cheryl Rothery, Coventry (4-1-92)
If people read Tim Munro's article and seriously believe that we don't need to do anything for **Doctor Who** to return, then they're seriously mistaken.

Fair enough, we now have a season of repeats on BBC2, and yes, from the one episode I've seen so far it looks very promising, especially for those of us who don't go to conventions and are therefore restricted to the choice of so-called "vintage" **Who** that BBC Video puts out.

However, I've noticed that all the coverage about the repeat season has so far referred to **Doctor Who** very much in the past tense - "the series ran for 26 years" - which is hardly an encouraging sign and doesn't really add any weight to the BBC's argument that "**Doctor Who** will return".

As far as I can see, if nothing is done, **Doctor Who** will **not** return and we'll have to make do with video releases and repeat seasons, as we do now.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Alex J. Geaitns, Cambridge (5-1-92)
I've just witnessed See For Yourself - hope the Save **Who** lawyers were on hand to witness the non-specific comments of Jonathan Powell and Michael Checkland. 'Obi-Wan' Checkland commented: "We are determined to spend more money on drama"; 'Darth' Powell was heard to say: "BBC1 is about other things than simply ratings. It is about remaining committed to a public service broadcasting schedule, where a whole variety of programmes and subject matters and different ways of seeing and looking at things are included in a popular schedule." So, provided that "variety" includes science fiction, **Doctor Who** has a chance (I say this with tongue firmly in cheek).

The whole programme, considering it was produced by an independent (who obviously wanted to produce it again next year) was sycophantic to the extreme. The questions were obviously orchestrated, the flow too controlled - if the BBC were on trial, you could well believe that the jury were sufficiently 'paid off'.

ED: Can Powell actually be aware of the number of times he has publicly shot himself in the foot with his bizarre and confounded statements? The guy must have a death wish, and the BBC come to that for appointing such a buffoon as Controller of BBC1 in the first place. Now, methinks nice Mr. Yentob deserves promotion forthwith!

ONE UP TO D W M?

Iain Morrison, Glasgow (22-1-92)
What! Can it be? Have DWM stolen a march on DWB? It appears so: DWM#183 carries an optimistic report about a company connected with Darklight Productions and how they are assisting the company in their bid to produce the series. By contrast, DWB#98 has no mention of this story at all. Do you think it is worth bringing to the attention of your readers, or do you simply feel miffed that the company did not approach you and your writers for advice on the show's past?

Anthony Brown's feature on Jonathan Powell was extremely well researched and written, a balanced and fair examination of the BBC1 Controller's 'achievements' to date. Send it to the BBC sixth floor - perhaps it might open a few eyes. Powell is a very good producer - the recent repeats of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy demonstrate this. Perhaps after he leaves as Controller he could take over on **Doctor Who**? Perhaps not.

ED: With respect to DWM, as with their unending coverage of Coast to Coast we feel that they are again prematurely building up their readers' hopes. As their article states, no contract has been awarded at this stage, and who's to say Darklight will win it just because they have Mavrel's backing? We would be as pleased as anyone if John Freeman's wishes materialised into fact, but we see no point in raising our readers hopes unnecessarily. If and when the news is made official, then we will carry full details, but not before. This was the policy we adopted with Coast to Coast, and suffice to say the space we saved which would otherwise have been wasted with wishful speculation and carefully manipulated 'leaks' has been put to better use.

THE MAGIC OF OLD 'WHO

Roger Shore, Belfast (23-1-92)
I **would** like to point out to Kate Orman (letters, DWB#98), who commented about my letter in DWB#94, that I have seen a lot of Pertwee and Tom Baker stories in recent years and, as an adult, I've been able to appreciate the stories a lot better because I can now perceive ideas and concepts behind the stories - something I would not have done as a child. As a child you remember snatches of stories, fragments here and there that can distort your perception. Take **Spearhead from Space**. My one memory of that introduction to colour were the Autons mowing people down in the street. As an adult I can appreciate the **Quatermass** origins, the excellent storytelling and overall production. Will the same be said of present **Doctor Who** in years to come? I'll be quite blunt. **Not a chance in hell!**

From **Trial of a Time Lord** to **Survival**, the **Doctor Who** stable has managed to produce more turkeys than even Bernard Matthews could ever dream of. More excrement wafting from the screen I've yet to come across. As for "modern **Doctor Who**", let's be honest. We are talking about JNT's vision of **Doctor Who**: high camp humour usually detrimental to the story, non-existant scripts, bad casting. Tell me one actor or actress in the first 18 years of **Doctor Who** that comes close to Bonnie Langford for sheer awfulness. At least **STTNG** treats its fans with an awful lot more respect.

And as for the "magic haze of childhood", we are talking Northern Ireland here which tends to end your childhood very quickly. No, I shall now plug into "this magical haze" called **Terror of the Zygons** and, as for "modern **Doctor Who**" - anyone got a large steel bucket?

RESISTANCE TOO TRENDY

John Miller, Forest Hill SE23 (15-1-92)
There were some interesting and rare clips selected for **Resistance is Useless**, but these seem to have been meshed into a bit of a jumble, along with the dubious insertion of humorous puns as titles for linking sections. This is something I feel would appeal to the college brand of audience of The Late Show, but not to those with a genuine appreciation of the show which I am certain constituted the vast majority of the audience. Although we are infinitely grateful to the Late Show team for taking an interest, I fail to see why the production of such presentations - as with the Lime Grove day - always falls to trendy producers who seem to be more concerned with amusing the partisan interests and whims of psuedo intellectual college graduates who tune in for the sake of entertaining their perverse and allegedly sophisticated senses of humour than those with a genuine interest. Not only do the legions of fans, I am sure, find the imagery of the 'anorak' used insulting and condescending, but it seems to defeat the point of attracting them to what is, fundamentally, a programme specifically for them.

Game of Rassilon

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THE AZTECS

CONGRATULATIONS! It is my very pleasant duty to inform you that you, Mr and Mrs Fandom, have won the Star Prize in the BBC Video Lottery -- a chance to own your very own copy of not merely the finest complete surviving Hartnell story, but also the very best of the black and white adventures. Allow me to present for your delight and (possibly) astonishment, that gleaming jewel in the Doctor Who crown -- *The Aztecs*.

This, brothers and sisters, is *the* Hartnell release. Forget *An Unearthly Child*, superb though it is. Forget the overrated Daleks and their tedious invasion of Earth. Forget even the daringly innovative but sadly crude *Web Planet*. You are never -- unless someone finds *The Crusade* -- going to see a better Hartnell story than this. Whichever enlightened soul at BBC Enterprises decided to commit it to video deserves, at the very least, a medal, and possibly canonisation.

The Aztecs, to borrow Marion's description of Robin i' the Hood, is everything you don't expect -- a story as far removed as it is possible to be from Doctor Who's formulaic, cliché-ridden public reputation. With its solid construction, its simplicity and economy, its minimalist approach in both script and production, its striking characterisations and its breathtaking style and power of language, it is not just a classic Doctor Who story -- those, after all, are ten-a-penny. It is also one of the finest example of sixties television drama, capable of holding its head high among the very best of the era; something of which we -- as fans -- should be immensely proud. This is Doctor Who as near as it ever came to being art. If you are one of the thankfully few who still believe the Big Lie, once sadly prevalent in fandom, that the Hartnell historicals were merely boring interfaces between the 'classic' science fiction stories, you're about to meet the case for the defence, a story whose wider availability must surely blow the last remnants of that discredited myth right out of the water.

And yet, I must admit to some trepidation as to how this underrated gem will be received by fandom at large. As someone who has been evangelising on the story's behalf ever since that magical, unforgettable day when I first saw it, I feel now like an anxious parent watching their pride and joy take its first faltering steps in public. What, I wonder, will people make of this most mature and literate of stories?

My worries are not, I hasten to add, due to any failings on the story's part. It's simply that the magic of *The Aztecs* lies very much in the fact that it is *not* typical Doctor Who. If BBC2 ever repeated it, it would leave most viewers very surprised indeed, for it is far removed from what one expects when one sees those famous titles and hears that legendary theme. Some have even said that it's far too good to be a Doctor Who story, and there's an element of truth in that, except that this is Doctor Who in its very first year, before it got bogged down in articial boundaries and limitations. If John Lucarotti tried to sell it today he'd be told 'It's not really a Doctor Who story' ... but in 1964, nobody knew exactly what a Doctor Who story was 'supposed' to be. The show was new, bold and exciting, and its horizons were yet to be limited by convention. There was very little that could not be tried, and few restrictions on what was and was not 'good Doctor Who'. Paradoxically, that freedom enabled Lucarotti to produce one of the finest pieces in the Doctor Who canon. Untypical of Doctor Who as a whole it may be, but it is also the show's most thoughtful and perceptive examination of the politics of power, the nature of belief, and the morality and futility of mucking around with other people's cultures -- an issue which the series really should have faced up to far more than it did.

So ... *The Aztecs* is not an action-adventure. It is not a sequence of punch-ups, shoot-outs, captures and escapes. It is a drama in the purest sense; an interaction of characters, a conflict of opposing forces -- a far more human story than Doctor Who viewers are usually presented with, and one in which our heroes' paramount goal and ultimate achievement is mere survival. In its style, its construction, the thoughtfulness of its philosophical content and in its presentation, it is -- with the possible exception of *The Crusade* -- the nearest Doctor Who ever got to the power and literacy of stage drama.

Conflict is at the heart of *The Aztecs*. It is inherent in the contradictory nature of Aztec culture, a society which has produced breathtaking accomplishments in science and art, yet remains ignorant of the wheel, and tolerant of the barbarity of human sacrifice. This dichotomy is pointed out right from the start, and powerfully represented in the contrast between the faltering, sensitive, decent High Priest of Knowledge, Autloc, and his maniacal, devious, unscrupulous opposite, the High Priest of Sacrifice, Tlotoxl; 'Beauty and horror developing hand in hand'. Barbara, as every fanboy who's read his programme guide knows, seeks to end this state of affairs, convinced that if she destroys 'everything that is evil here' then 'everything that's good would survive when Cortez landed'. She couldn't be more wrong, of course, and the Doctor knows it. 'What you are trying to do is impossible. I know. Believe me -- I know!' he declares, with the horrified certainty born -- one senses -- of dreadful experience. But thus are sown the seeds of the other central and essential conflicts of the story -- conflict between the Doctor and his idealistic companion; and conflict between the time travellers and a culture which they know and judge, but do not understand any better than Cortez and his brutal Conquistadores. Uniquely, the TARDIS crew are here presented as a disruptive intrusion, square pegs in round holes, who create only disorder and pain; the Doctor breaks the heart of one of the few decent people involved; Barbara destroys the faith and the life of another (and despite the Doctor's attempts to comfort her over Autloc's loss of faith, this is clearly what happens. The evangelical overtones of the book are mercifully absent); Susan creates upset by refusing to marry the Perfect Victim, effectively challenging key elements of the social order; and Ian, by his mere presence, disturbs the power structure in the barracks. Thus, however unwittingly, and in Barbara's case through the best of intentions, the Doctor's little band set themselves against the guardians of the local status quo who, not surprisingly, fight back. The result is a story of political intrigue every bit as compelling as some of the best of the Bard; a tale of the struggle for power between the forces of reform, represented by Barbara, and the forces of reactionary conservatism -- determined to preserve their cosy world exactly as it is -- represented by Tlotoxl. It's a story told in words rather than actions; a tale of machinations, motivations, secrets and discoveries, plots and counterplots, related via a series of dialogues, confrontations and even soliloquies.

That makes it sound wordy and dull. It isn't. True, it probably contains more pure dialogue than any other adventure, but it is actually the most gripping of all the surviving Hartnell stories. Lucarotti's script is a shining example of total professionalism, richly demonstrating the much higher standards of writing prevalent in sixties television. Perfectly paced, it deftly avoids the tedious padding that dogs so many Hartnell stories. It is strikingly characterised and exceptionally evocative. It is told with admirable simplicity and clarity, and the dialogue manages to be both economical yet breathtaking in its power and elegance. *The Aztecs* revels in the sheer beauty of language in a manner almost unique in Who's history, exuding an articulate literacy which is worlds away from the monosyllabic Def II-esque street cred 'yoofspeak' of recent fare. It is a story rich in relishably quotable lines, too many to go into here, but suffice to say that if the brilliant exchange between Barbara and Tlotoxl in episode two (*'How shall a man know his gods?'*) isn't at least as well-known and oft-quoted as *'To hold in my hand a capsule that contained such power'* by this time next year, then something is very wrong. However, don't run away with the idea that all this story has to offer is poetic language. This is one of those rare adventures which actually faces up to the thorny moral problems it raises, and even toys with the ethical challenges posed by the Doctor Who format per se. It is a story which takes time out for our heroes to reconsider their preconceptions and voice their fears and vulnerability; a story in which the sense of threat is far more real than in Terry Nation's formulaic potboilers; a story which even allows the Doctor his only romantic dalliance *ever* -- and if you still indignantly maintain that the Doctor just doesn't do that sort of thing, try denying it after the brilliant scene at the end in which, hard though he tries, he cannot quite bring himself to leave Cameca's ring behind.

Given such a brilliant, sustained piece of quality scripting, it's unsurprising that the performances of the cast are uniformly excellent. Certainly I've never seen William Hartnell on better form. Forget any image you have of Hartnell as a faltering old duffer struggling for every line. His performance here is confident, powerful and extremely sensitive, portraying a Doctor of presence, authority and depth. Lucarotti's extremely perceptive and sympathetic understanding of the first Doctor enables Hartnell to display every facet of his characterisation, and he rises to the challenge with impeccable style and professionalism. It is his finest performance in the role, as absolutely convincing in his horror at Barbara's decision to rewrite history and his desperation to change her mind as he is in his poignant, touching and dignified wooing of Cameca, the hilarious naïvety with which he walks straight into an unplanned betrothal, and his painful unease at the relationship's development and his and Cameca's final parting. Only twice does he fluff his lines, but even these are classic Billyisms, the second of which is relishable for the speed and ingenuity with which he rescues himself.

The portrayal of the companions is equally admirable. All have solid roles, giving the lie to Eric Saward's assertion that Who is impossible to plot with four regulars. William Russell is reliable as ever, Carole Ann Ford makes the most of a role of rare substance, and Jaqueline Hill is superb as Barbara. The idea that sixties Who was the last word in misogyny is shot to pieces by

Lucarotti's portrayal of Barbara. Here she is strong-willed, intelligent, capable and self-reliant; naïve, perhaps, in what she sets out to do, but admirably idealistic, and quite a match for the ruthless Tlotoxl. Jaqueline Hill plays her part with power, presence and great understanding. Her slow realisation of the futility of her ambitions is touching and convincing, and the affection evident between Barbara and the Doctor is heartwarming to see. For sheer drama and poignancy, it's hard to match the scene in episode two where the Doctor, horrified at the events Barbara has set in motion, thunders his fury at her, then relents and shows genuine remorse when he succeeds only in reducing her to tears. Barbara is a *very* underrated companion. Along with Sarah and Liz Shaw, she is one of the show's very few strong women.

The supporting cast are similarly impressive. Keith Pyott may seem to be reading off cue-cards, but his faltering, indecisive air is exactly right for poor, oh-so-decent, ultimately doomed Autloc. Ian Cullen brings to Ixta an edge of psychotic relish. Walter is noble and malleable as Tonila, and Margot Van Der Burgh is stately, charming and graceful as Cameca, displaying a deeply touching rapport with Hartnell which makes their scenes together work to perfection. Even Andre Boulay, the Perfect Victim, plays his part with a stolid, aristocratic air which makes one forgive his tendency to sound Australian. And top of the tree, stealing every scene he appears in and providing powerful opposition for Hartnell and Jaqueline Hill, is John Ringham's Tlotoxl, one of the most striking villains ever to grace Doctor Who. Clearly modelled, in both voice and posture, on Olivier's Richard the Third, Tlotoxl is a superbly perceptive depiction of evil, a ruthless, sly and cunning manipulator of others, a pragmatist of the first order, a practised and accomplished politician not far removed from Doctor Who's other most famous reactionary High Priest, Hepesh. With his cloyingly evil delivery, lingering with relish over every deliciously wicked line, Ringham richly deserves a place in the Villains Hall of Fame. And ultimately, of course, he is virtually the only Who Bad Guy ever to actually win the day, leaving our heroes to flee in the TARDIS, lucky just to have escaped alive from his brutal clutches.

The Aztecs' reliance on its timeless assets of quality writing and powerful acting is, I suspect, the reason it has aged so gracefully. The focus is continually on the people involved, with the settings as mere backdrops to the drama, and so there are no wobbly paper-plate flying saucers or risably dated hardware to provoke the hilarity of nineties audiences. This is not, though, to denigrate it as a production in any way, for it is as finely realised as it is written and played. There are requirements within it, such as the secret tunnels, the tomb entrance, the eclipses and the final showdown atop a pyramid between Ian and Ixta, which must have caused director John Crockett to baulk when he first read the script, but he rises to the challenge with confidence and skill, telling the story with a pace, style and flexibility of camerawork which is extremely unusual in sixties Who, and far removed from the static studio work of overrated directors like Richard Martin. The rare action sequences are reasonably well done, and the story's grand climax -- the fight between Ian and Ixta, done on film -- although a little too balletic and lacking the savage ferocity of the fight between Kal and Za in *The Firemaker*, is still impressive. The lighting is atmospheric throughout, the cliffhangers are stronger than usual in a Hartnell story, and the design is exceptionally good, courtesy of Barry Newbery, whose sets are solid and convincing, but whose masterpiece must surely be the incredibly detailed cyclorama painting of the Aztec city seen from the top of the Temple. They could never get away with that today, in 625-line colour, but in misty monochrome it works a treat. Well, it had to. Eighty per cent of the story takes place in front of it.

The costumes, although not strictly accurate, are eye-catching and richly detailed, and Richard Rodney Bennett's score is simple but effective, echoing and enhancing the mood of the piece, from the light, fluting theme for the Garden of the Aged, through the ominous rumbling of the Temple, to the haunting, squawking motif he devises for Yetaxa's tomb -- all light years away from Tristram Carey's electronic dirges or Dudley Simpson's tinkling piano.

The Aztecs, then, is one of Doctor Who's finest ninety minutes, a damn fine drama and splendid television by any standards. Those of you coming to it for the first time are about to experience one of the most beautiful treats the show has to offer. I envy you.

TIM MUNRO

The Aztecs will be released by BBC Video in May.

Ian Michael Kerry, W.Yorkshire (3-1-92)
In many ways, Resistance is Useless was the answer to a fan's prayers - twenty-six years condensed into one bite! However, the production side looked a little weak in places. To begin with, who on earth was the guy in the anorak? We never saw his face, just a blood red glow inside the hood! Judging by his "Fanboy" conversation, could it have been the ghost of Whizzkid?

The second problem was the choice of clips. Many of them were good, and memorable for fan and public alike. However, there was too much dross for it to be regarded as a true look at the show's history. While the odd crappy clip is useful is reflecting the sometimes crappy stories, there was, I felt, too many of them. Often clips were used in a way to mock the show itself. Perhaps the public expects **Doctor Who** to be "cheap", by whatever definition, and the clips were chosen to live up to expectations.

However, we must applaud BBC2 for the chance to see rare clips and episodes at all.

C. Lakin, Staffordshire (18-1-92)
Did the BBC really have to choose **The Time Meddler** as the first **Who** repeat in over seven years? Are they trying to discredit fans even further by offering the nation this totally useless piece of over-padded historical dirge? Hartnell didn't even make an appearance in part 2!

I still can't make my mind up about **Resistance is Useless**. Anorak apart I liked the general idea, particularly the bias away from the JNT era towards the surreality and innovation of the '60s and '70s. A second look at Soldeed re-affirmed my belief that **Horns of Nimon** really is a totally misinterpreted rollercoaster of an epic. Why do so many mistake campness for crapiness? It's better than **The Time Meddler** any day!

Peter Raitz, Leeds (21-1-92)
The cover news of DWB#98 left my gob well and truly smacked! Admittedly the footage of Mavic Chen's spaceship has been rumoured to be in existence for years, but the rest of the Late Show find (as it will, no doubt, become known - certainly more plausible than myths involving Mormon church cellars, at any rate!) is great news. The prospect of the clips being included on the Dalek tape is even better - too many of these miscellaneous excerpts change hands for ridiculous sums of money simply because they are so scarce. The more repeat/video releases the better...

Less welcome is the news that **The Mind Robber** is to be the Troughton story in the current repeats rather than **The Seeds of Death**. I know the former was placed higher in the DWB poll, but I suspect **Seeds'** reputation has been unfairly tarnished by the butchered video release. Many fans may be surprised to learn that, when viewed episodically, not only is it a highly enjoyable story, but that you also do not get a headache by episode four!

WARHEAD (MARK TWO)

Nick Cooper (Mark Two), Leeds (22-1-92)
Have any of your readers noticed the remarkable similarity between the plot of Andrew Cartmel's forthcoming **Warhead** book, in which "destruction of the environment reaches the point of no return, (and) multinational corporations and super-rich individuals unite in a last desperate effort - not to save humankind but to buy themselves immortality in a poisoned world," and comedian Ben Elton's 1989 novel Stark, in which destruction of the environment reaches the point of no return, and multinational corporations and super-rich individuals unite in a last desperate effort - not to save humankind but to buy themselves immortality in a poisoned world? I think, perhaps, that Peter Darvill-Evans should be told before Elton's lawyers notice.

Paul Raven, Essex (9-1-92)
I have just finished reading Paul Cornell's **Revelation**. Verdict: utter crap! I found the book to be a total waste of time, full of pathetic blasts from the past and more scene to scene jumps (hence paragraphs) than I've had hot dinners. Words can hardly express my horror at the garbage I read masquerading as **Doctor Who** - especially having enjoyed the previous Timewyrm books so much. There are plenty of things more enjoyable than reading this book - counting your toes, for instance, twiddling your fingers or even watching washing spinning round in the laundrette.

At the end of the book I asked myself what on earth were those 200 pages supposed to mean? I couldn't make head nor tail of them, and I've got a bloody degree so I ain't stupid! Boyle (Katie?), Hemmings (Eddie?), what **were** they up to in the story for crying out loud! Give me good old **Time and the Rani** and **Paradise Towers** any day rather than another helping of **this!**

MARVEL RIPPED ME OFF!

Tina Bailey, Staffordshire (12-1-92)
I recently wrote to Marvel's UK STTNG magazine with some reliable information which I had obtained about the elusive actor, Brent Spiner, hoping that they would print a condensed version on their letters page (after fans requested more information about Data). It subsequently appeared in issue 23 (dated 7th December 1991), and to say I was shocked and upset is an understatement - on turning to page four I found the main part of my letter printed, **word for word**, as a 'professional' article with an impressive heading and a large photo of Data and an accompanying caption, but it wasn't credited to anyone, not even in small print under "contributors" at the bottom of the contents strip. My article was printed with three others to provide a double-page spread, and the impression given is that all were written by Rod Summers. I wonder if other readers have been abused in this way? I know there is a recession on, but that doesn't justify Marvel to steal fans' articles in this way rather than to pay a researcher.

WHAT If . . . the Timewyrm had been Season 27?

Genesys

This four-part story was penned by a writer new to the television programme but familiar to fandom -- American fan writer John Peel.

Most fans had written off this story before episode one was screened, no doubt due to the fact that JNT had described it as 'an action-adventure, designed to be a hook for the casual viewer to watch the rest of the season' and had assigned Michael Kerrigan as director. Kerrigan was blamed for Season 26's opener, *Battlefield*, which was also described as much the same. *Genesys* will probably be remembered as being decidedly average, but it's fair to say that Kerrigan has redeemed himself with this story.

Perhaps the story lent itself more to his style of direction than Ben Aaronovitch's script. Apart from the TARDIS and the Timewyrm encounter at the end of episode four, the story did not involve much use of technology (ie. the fighting scenes were all swords and shields). In other words, we weren't subjected to turgid 'firework' ray guns and improbably leaping knights.

An interesting aspect of the fight scenes were the sound effects. Knowing that graphic scenes of hacking and slaying are taboo, the production crew came up with the wonderful alternative of utilising gruesome sound effects as bodies squelched and bones crunched under Gilgamesh's sword play. Some of the screams were quite unsettling and it's sadistically satisfying to imagine children scuttling for the safety of a large sofa!

Kerrigan's casting was very successful. On paper Jaqueline Pearce as the evil villainess and Brian Blessed as an OTT warrior king seemed uninspired, even boring, but it is with all due credit to Pearce, Blessed and Kerrigan that they worked.

For once, Jaqueline Pearce appeared to be truly alien -- more concerned with being evil and emotional than the sort of scheming, devious, almost human roles that she played as both Servalan and Chessene. Even when her character changed into the white, glowing special effect and she was reduced to a chilling voice-over, the viewer was enthralled by her performance.

Brian Blessed was perhaps the only logical choice to play Gilgamesh, but no doubt when his guest appearance was announced many cringed in their memories of one of the all-time nadirs of the show, *Mindwarp*. Thankfully Blessed was held in check and wasn't allowed to 'enjoy' his role to the point of excess. Yes, he shouted a lot and was an egomaniac, self-opinionated, bossy, ignorant oaf but this was essential to the Mesopotamian storyline. I don't think anyone could knock Blessed in this role, and one only needs to dig out their once-played video of *Mindwarp* to see the difference.

A nice link to Season 26's offbeat story *Ghost Light* was the casting of Carl Forgione as Enkidu. It was hinted but never stated that this Neanderthal character was a descendant of Nimord.

Genesys wasn't perfect of course, but it seems obvious that the director was conscious of the lukewarm reception that his previous attempt got and set out to do his best to reclaim the appreciation of the fans.

Perhaps the biggest mistake was the implausible attempt of Sylvester McCoy to do an impersonation of Jon Pertwee in episode four. It beats me why this was ever written into the script. John Peel has always been a good fan writer and I doubt that he would script such a clumsy scene into his story. I lay the blame with Andrew Cartmel and believe this is his interpretation of injecting continuity threads into the series.

Considering that the story took place over a good few days, it could have done with an extra episode just to pace the story a bit better. I was reminded of the epic Hartnell tale, *Marco Polo*, which took seven episodes to unfold the travellers' journey across the Gobi desert and into Peking. Sadly these days of longer stories are long since gone.

Another aspect of *Genesys* with which I would take issue is the rather timid way that Gilgamesh's society was represented. I'm not suggesting anything pornographic, but surely people (especially kings) like Blessed's Gilgamesh would be more lecherous, suggestive and crude? There is a fleeting comment by Ace that the King has 'wandering hands' and she seemed ill at ease when she was close to his great bulk. Perhaps the time slot dictated the 'these characters are harlots but we mustn't point this out to the audience' mentality. Perhaps in the forthcoming novelisation, Peel will rectify this ...

The open-ended finale was quite well done, with most of this story's budget going towards the Terminator 2 style special effects for the Timewyrm creature.

Exodus

The second four-part story in the Timewyrm season saw the welcome return of Who stalwart Terrance Dicks. *Exodus* shows just how well he understands Doctor Who -- no matter who the actor is playing the Doctor, little traits and quirks are always current in Dicks's writing. For example the scene where McCoy stands on tiptoe to viciously slap the Nazi officer could have come straight out of a Troughton classic.

The director repsonsible for this gritty and realistic period piece was Andrew Morgan, the chap behind *Remembrance of the Daleks*, and in many ways this story was similar. The scenes were fast-paced and snappy with the action shifting every five minutes.

The cast for this story were faultless. The three actors playing Hitler, Himmler and Goebels were obviously chosen for their resemblance to the characters, but their acting was superb, especially Christopher Barnfellow as the unhinged, multi-faceted Hitler. The news that Angus Deaton (more familiar as the sarcastic host of BBC2's topical quiz Have I Got News For You) was cast as a ruthless Nazi lieutenant smacked of JNT's strange policy of miscasting light-entertainment stars in the series. However, Deaton rose to the occasion and gave us a truly evil performance as Hemmings, so much so that Deaton's character was written into the final story of this season very early on. Lieutenant Hemmings must rank along with the outstanding villains of yesteryear such as Sharaz Jek, Doctor Solon and Sutekh, to name but a few.

It was a coup for the production team to get Edward Brayshaw to return as the War Chief, even though he was virtually unrecognisable with the extensive make-up. Thankfully Philip Madoc did not return as the War Lord's son. No offence to the actor concerned, but he would have been too old to play his own offspring and it would only be the true fans that would pick up on such casting. Ross Kemp, the EastEnders regular, played the role well but it was difficult to convince myself that Grant Mitchel was a ruthless alien ...

The sets were very realistic -- especially the moody Black Coven -- and for once the damp, squalid dungeons actually looked miserable and uncomfortable!

Exodus wasn't entirely original -- a sort of cross between *Inferno* and *The War Games* -- but this story will probably be regarded as a classic in the not too distant future. Little references, such as the Doctor's German alias being Johann Schmidt, and the sparkling dialogue ('You've changed, Doctor -- but not very much. You were an insignificant little man when we met, and you still are') all add to make *Exodus* a traditional and very enjoyable tale.

The only criticism I would have to make is the rather rushed ending. Blink and you'd miss the encounter between the Timewyrm and the Doctor's magic lantern. This is presumably Cartmel's fault as Dicks's original story probably had no references to the Timewyrm. The following scene, the final scene, with Sylvester McCoy telling the weeping Hitler that he will fulfil his destiny, was poignant and is one of the best closing sequences I've ever seen in the series. Thankfully Dicks resisted the temptation to have the predictable and hackneyed 'Ace and the Doctor return to the place where they first landed and find that history had been shifted back on to its proper course' cop-out ending.

Apocalypse

Another writer new to writing for the tv series but, like John Peel, known for previous Doctor Who writing is Nigel Robinson. This three-part story was directed by the man who is usually given the more surreal stories to do -- Alan Wareing.

This story will probably be the one best remembered for the special effects this season. Sue Moore and Stephen Mansfield created their two best creations yet. The slavering pet of the Grand Matriarch, Fetch, was brilliant and far more convincing as an alien lifeform than Helen A's Fifi in *The Happiness Patrol*. The expressions that the rubber monster could give were unbelievable! It comes as no surprise to discover that the puppet creators made no less than five different faces for Fetch alone. The other 'monster' was, of course, the genetically engineered Homunculus and was handled just as well. To see little bits of the creature falling off in a perpetual decay/regeneration was a nice touch and the original design of the creature was inspired -- a slimy brain with a mouth and tentacles -- and very effective as a monster.

This was the first of two stories to feature past Doctors. In *Apocalypse* we see the return of the second Doctor and we are asked to accept that this happened in an off-screen journey in the sixties in the same way that *The Two Doctors* did. How do you recast Patrick Troughton? Why bother? Why not make it the third Doctor instead?

The resulting blend of treated clips, a Troughton sound-alike doing a voice-over, a Troughton double in long-shot and blurry computer graphics actually worked, but it seemed that too much effort and money was put into too little material.

The actual story was a little pedestrian, even though the usual syndrome of 'three-parters needing another episode' still applies. I was reminded of *The Krotons* as the Kirithons were led to the Panjistri over the course of the story.

The cast were again well chosen and livened up the story no end. The honours for *Apocalypse* must jointly go to Richard Wilson for his role as Huldah and the superb casting of Kathy Burke as Lilith, the Grand Matriarch. All too often, tall, beautiful actresses are cast as devious villainesses and it was refreshing to see the rotund form of Ms Burke as a high and mighty alien queen. I suppose this was to contrast with Jaqueline Pearce's portrayal of the Timewyrm.

There was a good use of lighting and I am always a sucker for seeing through the monster's point-of-view, especially when accompanied by guttural breathing.

In this story we have the Doctor faced with the dilemma of allowing the whole of creation to continue to exist or to save Ace. It's quite a twist to hear our hero proclaim that all things have to end eventually. Is this another of Cartmel's attempts to darken the Doctor? It's worth pointing out that the Doctor/Ace relationship is beginning to show strains when Ace blames her guardian for the death of Raphael and asks him why he didn't sacrifice himself for her and Raphael. Sophie Aldred manages to make this so convincing that we are sympathising with the Seventh Doctor for a change.

As with its predecessor, *Apocalypse* had a sudden ending which seemed a bit blasé. Hopefully the forthcoming novelisation will rectify this.

Revelation

The final story of the 27th season also rounds off the Timewyrm saga. It was directed by another fan writer, Paul Cornell, and directed by Nick Mallett.

Mallett was slagged off for his direction of McCoy's debut story, *Time and the Rani*, but apparently redeemed himself with *The Curse of Fenric* even though he was criticised for the amount of material that ended up on the cutting room floor. With *Revelation* Mallett has to contend with a three-part story that is stuffed full of surreal images, an introspective storyline and five Doctors. It wasn't going to be easy ...

This story was the one we were all waiting for. Guest starring Jon Pertwee and Peter Davison, we also heard the rich tones of Tom Baker as he did the voice-over for the shadowy Ferryman. The first Doctor was represented by the character of The Librarian. He was never referred to as 'The Doctor', although it was a bit obvious who he was supposed to be. Perhaps this was a conscious effort on the director's behalf since James Tanston did not look at all like the late William Hartnell. It's a shame that Richard Hurndall has passed away too, since his characterisation of Hartnell's Doctor was uncanny in *The Five Doctors*. The other main characters were also good, with Geoffrey Palmer as the quiet Reverend Trelaw and the child actor Sam Mead as the vicious schoolboy horror Chad Boyle. The nasty kid was very believable as one of the only things in the universe that scared the hell out of Ace. This story also saw the return of Angus Deaton as Lieutenant Hemmings and Jacqueline Pearce as the physical manifestation of the Timewyrm.

Thankfully the story made sense, although it goes without saying that it needs to be seen two or three times again before all the symbolic references and dialogue makes sense. JNT made a huge mistake when he decreed that *Revelation* should have only three episodes, but the same could be said for all three-parters. Then again, he does have the hideous task of sharing up a meagre fourteen episodes between four stories, which can't be easy. He has said himself that the optimum length of a Doctor Who story should be four episodes long.

It's also worth remembering that *The Five Doctors* was only 90 minutes long and featured far more prominent roles for the past Doctors. In *Revelation*, Pertwee has the biggest guest appearance with Davison, Tanston and Baker having little more than cameos. That's not a criticism, however, for this is most defiantly a vehicle for McCoy's dark interpretation and the brief appearances of other Doctors didn't steal the show from him which they could easily have done.

The imagery was quite surreal with no explanation of the origins of Saul, the living church. The green lighting on the moon surface was quite eerie and the slow motion scenes of Ace's two deaths and the Doctor's dance with Death was very effective.

If *Exodus* gave us the best story ending for a long time, then *Revelation* gave us a truly memorable cliff-hanger. The ending to episode two was one of the goriest and evil ever presented in the show. The malicious Boyle gores the Doctor with a sword (no blood, just a juicy sound effect!), McCoy doubles up in agony whilst the child holds up the stained blade and gleefully asks the body *'Who's gonna save you now?'* Chilling.

The incidental music was scored by Mark Ayres who, in a break with current tradition, scored the other three stories too. This gave the whole season a uniform feel in a subtle way. Who can ever forget the haunting metallic theme for the Timewyrm that never clunked but slithered? Brilliant.

The actual resolving of the Timewyrm menace, with the Doctor casually inflicting a baby with the computer virus/alien personality, underlines the darkness prevalent in the current incarnation of the Time Lord. This actual scene is pure Andrew Cartmel and no doubt Paul Cornell's original ending was vastly different.

This whole Timewyrm concept must have been the idea of the interview-shy script-writer and, in all fairness, seems to have worked better than the bogged-down *Trial of a Time Lord* season of a few years ago.

It's interesting to read in last month's DWB that the next season will also be linked and that the 14 episodes will be shared between three stories and not four. The theme is something to do with a cat, and one of the stories will be by Andrew Cartmel ...

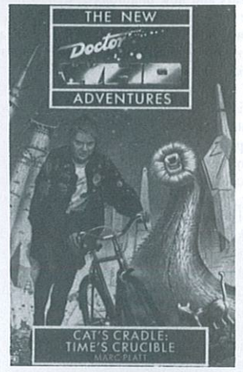
JOHN PETTIGREW

book review

TIME'S CRUCIBLE

by Marc Platt

Virgin Books; £3.50



IT'S DIFFICULT to know quite what to say about *Time's Crucible*, the opening instalment of the Cat's Cradle trilogy. In many ways it's a breathtaking worth, a novel which would astonish anyone who regards Doctor Who as 'the show where people dressed up in pressure cookers run up and down corridors', and which genuinely lives up to the hype on the back. But equally, at least in the early sections, I found myself wondering whether it was worth the effort it took to read it. And interestingly, it was difficult to read not because it forced me to visualise and think through concepts as alien to common sense as any Escher print, but because of the writing style, which never gave me any trouble in *Ghost Light* and *Battlefield*. Perhaps I was just tired -- it'd been a long day, and this is a *looong* book by Doctor Who standards -- 275 small print pages. But I do find it almost impossible to say whether *Time's Crucible* works, or even to guess how fandom will receive it ...

Now that wasn't a problem with the Timewyrm books. *Genesys*, if there was any taste in fandom, was always going to get the critical pasting it received (though to be fair, it was treated more harshly than it deserved because it was the first book, and people were afraid it might be the way of the future ...). *Exodus* was traditional Who, freed from the restrictions of broadcast television and taken, magnificently, to its limits. *Apocalypse* was an enjoyable read which almost managed to disguise how ordinary and, ultimately, forgettable it was. Only the verdict on *Revelation* could have been in any doubt, simply because some felt that it had gone so far that it 'wasn't Doctor Who anymore'.

Raising the spectre of the Timewyrm isn't quite as gratuitous as it might seem, as *Time's Crucible* has a number of elements in common with the earlier series. The main villain(s), The Process, is a worm-like datavore which feeds on information, and that's a concept not a million miles away from the Timewyrm itself -- or at least, from the Timewyrm of Peter Darvill-Evans's original proposal, which resurfaced to an extent in *Revelation*, and which was always a more interesting idea than *Genesys*'s derivative Cyber-parody. In addition, the TARDIS deprives a central character of their memory at one point (though this is an essential part of the plot, not an unnecessary add-on as in John Peel's book), and the novel opens with the TARDIS warning the Doctor of imminent danger. Unfortunately, this opening sequence, which, despite a later reference to the Timewyrm, seems to imply that Cat's Cradle follows on directly from *Survival*, is rather heavy going (though a dozen times better than its equivalent in *Genesys*), and should perhaps have been cut back. Similarly Ace's nightmare in chapter six, which features Sorin, Glitz, Manisha and her mum, and links the 'introduction' to the 'main plot', is unnecessary, irrelevant and rather tired, coming so soon after a whole book along the same lines.

From here on though *Time's Crucible* is fine. Weakened and under attack from within, the TARDIS collides with the Time Schape, an experimental ship from Gallifrey's distant past -- the Age of Chaos. Both Ace and the Schape's crew find themselves marooned in an insane ruined city, ruled over by the Process, which exercises power through its insect-headed guards.

To give any description of the plot from this point on without giving it all away would be impossible. In many ways *Time's Crucible* is a concept-driven novel, and that concept isn't made clear until fairly late on. For much of the book events simply occur without apparent rhyme or reason (in a similar manner to the excellent Star Trek novel *The Entropy Effect*, which presents the paradoxical consequences of time travel without any explanation, long before the events which caused them). You simply have to remember what's happened, and stand ready to put the pieces of the jigsaw together when the opportunity arrives. Fortunately the moments of horrified realisation as you see the picture being formed make the effort more than worthwhile. And by the end it does all make sense (at least, I think it does -- I'll have to read it another couple of times before I'm sure ...), though we're never given a blatant 'So tell me Professor' type explanation. If you still don't know what *Warrior's Gate* and *Castrovalva* were about, then you're in trouble, because you need to have followed them to understand the explanation. If you thought *Ghost Light* was too complex, then you're going to hate this ...

But that's only one of *Time's Crucible*'s plotlines. As the Doctor and Ace struggle for existence in the paradoxical world of the Process, the disaster which has overcome the Time Schape accelerates the developing crisis back on ancient Gallifrey. *Time's Crucible* is also the story of Rassilon's rise to power -- and the events it describes are not those of The Scrolls of Rassilon (which makes Virgin's decision to release *The Gallifrey Chronicles* when this was already in the pipeline seem rather questionable). This is the 'official' version, based around the production office approved glimpses of the Old Time in the *Remembrance* novel.

Reviewing *The Gallifrey Chronicles* back in DWB 96, I commented that it was 'no *I Claudius*'. Well this is -- or rather, *I Claudius* (along with several other accounts of Roman history) has clearly been a major influence on *Time's Crucible*. At the start of Robert Graves's novel, Claudius consults the Sybil of Cumae, who receives prophecy from the god Apollo, as to the fate of his family, only to find its doom already foretold in the book of the Sybilline Curiosities, an account of discredited prophecies made by the Sybil's predecessors. Early on in *Time's Crucible*, Rassilon seeks an audience with the Pythia, the latest in a long line of seers who have ruled the Gallifreyan Empire for generations. Across the universe the ruling augurers are dying (the latest killed by the Gallifreyan Hero Prydonius, whose warship Apollaten returns home at the start of the book), and the Pythia fears that the mystic age is drawing to a close. No longer able to see the future herself, she has begun research into time travel, and is scouring the few unfulfilled prophecies in the Book of Future Legends to find the name of her successor. She's prepared to use every weapon she has to ensure that Gallifrey doesn't fall into the hands of Rassilon and his unbelieving neo-technologists ...

This account of the Dark Time is everything the Scrolls of Rassilon wasn't -- subtle, intriguing and well characterised. Whereas John Peel's Gallifrey had no more reality than a BBC set, Marc Platt manages to convince you that there's a whole world out there, of which you've seen no more than a picture postcard would reveal, and about which you thirst to learn more. That's also true of the characters, with slightly less fortunate results. Among the Schape's crew, the minor characters are so well described that I felt many of them were potentially more interesting than those who did get major roles (such as Shonnzi). No complaints though about Vael, a character whose role, for good or evil, is refreshingly uncertain at first.

Time's Crucible will probably be remembered though as the book which explained how the Doctor could be a contemporary of Rassilon -- or at least, as the book which provided enough clues for the answer to become obvious, though it's made clear that, even in the Old Time, *the other* wasn't exactly one of the Gallifreyan people. Back in '88, with the memory of the appalling Season 24 all too fresh in people's minds it's understandable that fandom assumed that Andrew Cartmel had contemptuously decided to ignore Doctor Who's continuity in order to suit his own purposes. Now, *Time's Crucible* makes it clear that he was actually embarking on a radical and brilliant reinterpretation of the show's history (though I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the solution to the mystery was thought up at a later date). Those who've enjoyed the uncertainty of the last few years shouldn't be worried though, as *Time's Crucible* leaves a lot of questions still to be answered -- in particular, its events make it clear that Susan cannot, could not possibly be the Doctor's grand-daughter -- but it then reminds us that she is just that ...

Hold on -- the McCoy era explained? (*Time's Crucible* even manages to make some sense of *Silver Nemesis*!) A sub-plot that describes the rise of Rassilon? A main plot in the tradition of *Warrior's Gate*? And I'm grumbling about a certain stodginess in the early chapters? Forget what I said earlier -- *Time's Crucible* is superb!

Just get your thinking caps on before starting it ...

ANTHONY BROWN

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE

Three plays from Audio Visuals' Season Four

VIRGIN BOOKS may have launched the current Doctor off to 'New Adventures', but Audio Visuals have been producing their own 'Adventures in Time and Space' for several years. Now in their fourth season, the Audio Visuals team have produced over twenty-five audio plays with their own Doctor (Nicholas Briggs of Mythmakers fame) and a whole host of companions and adversaries.

Spending your hard-earned cash on amateur productions is not something one does with an abundance of confidence. After all, we've all seen a school play, and some of us have been in them -- although that's not something we usually tell our friends. The idea of amateur Doctor Who tapes immediately brings to mind a gaggle of die-hard fans (for which read socially maladjusted individuals) huddled around an old Phillips reel-to-reel in someone's bedroom. Accompanied by sound effects care of an old Spcae Invaders game (low on batteries) and a few empty crisp packets, with a script containing such gems as 'Oh no, not the Reversed Neutron Polarity Flow Generator!' and 'It's not over yet Doctor, you have not heard the last of the Invaders from Zarniwoop!'

This, fortunately, is not the case with the Audio Visuals team.

The adventures are fast paced and action filled, reminiscent of the style of tv Who in recent years. The quality of production is at least on a par with the official BBC radio production of Slipback, although further comparisons to that feeble Douglas Adams pastiche would do the AV team a serious disservice.

Surprisingly for an amateur production, the standard of the acting throughout the season is consistently strong. Those of you resisting the tapes for fear of releasing from your stereos a mob of cringingly obsessive fans with vacant enthusiasm and invisible talent can approach your hi-fi's without trepidation.

Nigel Airs is both engaging and convincing as the reserved and angst-ridden companion Truman Crouch. Fifteen minutes into the first play of season four, entitled *Deadfall*, I was deeply committed to the young ex-colonist as he wrestles with guilt after failing to be able to aid a fallen friend.

A team of supporting actors make frequent and welcome appearances in various roles throughout the season. Amanda Hurwitz deserves mention as the wonderfully brash and strong Lloyd in *Deadfall*, and as a headstrong revolutionary in *Subterfuge*. Unlike their tv sisters, women in Audio Visuals stories are treated seriously, capable of making rational decisions and actions. Most of the tapes boast at least two strong female characters, and 'screamers' of the Bonnie Langford variety are conspicuous by their absence.

But of course, it is the portrayal of the Doctor himself which interests and concerns us most. Can Nicholas Briggs actually *be* the hero we love so much? Well, yes and no. To attribute credit where it's due, Briggs had developed his own unique portrayal, whilst retaining that intangible 'Doctorishness'. In fact, Briggs's interpretation owes a greater debt to Jeremy Brett's Sherlock Holmes than to any of his professional cousins. Audio Visuals' Doctor is a cold, emotionally-distanced man, quick to anger, tempered only by occasional moments of affection and humour. If one were to attempt a comparison with one of the tv Doctors (which is rather unfair), Briggs's portrayal lies somewhere between William Hartnell's (without the senility) and Colin Baker's (without the obnoxiousness).

However, whilst the characterisation is strong and his own, it is difficult to escape the feeling that Nicholas is enjoying himself just a little bit too much. Which prevents his Doctor from being wholly believable all of the time.

This aside, the Doctor/companion relationship continues in the McCoy/Aldred tradition: avoiding the unnecessary and now infamous TARDIS bickering scene set-piece for a relationship which is valid and developing. The crew of the TARDIS are real and likeable enough for us to care what happens to them and how well they get on with each other.

Of the stories themselves, *Deadfall*, the season's opener, is the strongest of the three tapes reviewed here. Tense, atmospheric and well-paced, it involves a group of female prisoners coping with an extremely malevolent stowaway onboard their space-ship. *Deadfall* mixes a unique cocktail, whose prime ingredients appear to be Prisoner Cell Block H and *that* Ridley Scott epic. A powerful collage of images indeed.

Like the Virgin *New Adventures*, each individual tape of the season is embraced by an overarching story. This umbrella theme, concerning an entity known only as 'Justyce', explores the effects of time-travelling and the ethics of intervention.

This weighty use of ongoing themes and stories occasionally makes plots incomprehensible if one play is heard out of context. A new listener to season four has to take in both the destruction of Gallifrey and a companion being tortured by Daleks in the first ten minutes. Some of the stories (eg. *Requiem*) are totally self-contained, but most, and this is especially true of the latest release *Subterfuge*, are rather difficult to follow unless the listener is familiar with the AV universe. The only real solution to this is to buy the entire season. This is not as prohibitively expensive as it sounds, as the tapes are very reasonably priced and released infrequently.

The themes of stories stay well within the traditional arena of Doctor Who. *Deadfall* outlines the horrors of germ warfare; *Requiem* fits snugly into the genre of 'oddball', being concerned with a perfect musical note which disrupts the fabric of time; whilst *Subterfuge* deals with toxic waste and the plight of the individual against bureaucracy.

However, whilst each adventure tends to have an undercurrent of social and moral commentary, the Audio Visuals team studiously avoid the lectures which so often characterise American science fiction and successfully make their point through story-telling.

On a more critical note, the theme music is frighteningly poor. The AV team have obviously been refused the right to use the official theme and have produced their own apeing opus. Theirs, unfortunately, sounds too similar to the tv version and suffers severely from the comparison.

That complaint aired, the rest of the production is delightfully original. The humour in the plays is subtle and understated, raising a smile rather than a belly-laugh. The scripts are occasionally a little stilted, but more often witty and rather charming. It is obvious that the AV tapes are something of a labour of love and deserve as wide an audience as possible.

At £2 per adventure (£4 for a double tape story) the tapes are, as I have said before, amazing value. After all, a blank C90 must cost about £1.20. So if you buy one tape and hate it, you've only wasted 80p.

With fandom ready to sue the BBC for failing to put the Doctor on the small screen, Audio Visuals, whilst not quite the real McCoy, remind us that the Doctor is still alive and kicking and something worth fighting for.

MATTHEW JONES

Audio Visuals' tapes are available at £2 each (including p&p, cheques/POs payable to Gary Russell) from Audio Visuals, 26 Chalsey Rd, London SE4 1YW.

It's not a what-not you know, it's Dr Who you know

THERE are television programmes with high audience appreciation figures. There are die-hard fans of certain shows. And then there are cults which refuse to lie down and die, the best current example of which being BBC1's science fiction drama series Dr Who.

The last new Who season, broadcast in 1989 and strangely scheduled to clash directly with Granada Television's top-rating Coronation Street, was shortly followed by the news that future editions of the programme would be made by an independent producer.

In spite of a rising tide of frustration among the programme's loyal fans – who at times have become a little *too* exuberant in their protests to have their favourite show reinstated – the Beeb's drama department has remained tight-lipped about Dr Who's future. Its fate is believed to be controlled by BBC1 controller Jonathan Powell and James Arnold-Baker, head of BBC Enterprises. Neither is apparently kindly disposed towards the travelling Time Lord and his intergalactic adversaries like this ICE WARRIOR (right, from 1969's adventure, The Seeds Of Death).

The campaign to have the programme returned now appears to have reached a head. The Museum of the Moving Image's Dr Who exhibition has been extended several times since it was opened last summer due to its popularity. Stories issued every other month by BBC Video consistently sell anything upwards of 15,000 copies, with two more, The Caves Of Androzani and Robot, now in the best-sellers' lists. And, most astonishing of all, BBC2 controller Alan Yentob commissioned a season of repeats, selected by the production team of arts magazine The Late Show.

Rumours are now circulating that a revitalised Dr Who would now appear on BBC2, rather than BBC1. Waging war with an underfunded Channel 4 in the ratings, Yentob has recruited several sci-fi series with considerable success, as the viewing figures for Thunderbirds and Star Trek – The Next Generation will testify, although Powell was reportedly sour-faced on learning of his counterpart's decision to revive the show.

Fans are now on tenterhooks to see if the repeat shows' ratings are strong enough for the green light to be given for a new series.

The behaviour of some devotees may leave a lot to be desired, but, to be fair, one would have thought that, as a public service broadcaster, the BBC would be happy to make a programme people actually wanted to watch. Or maybe being a public service broadcaster means serving the public with what the BBC deems most suitable ...

■ The Dr Who exhibition continues at MOMI until February 23, with The Worlds of Dr Who special event over the weekend of February 15/16; Dr Who – Robot and The Caves Of Androzani are available now on BBC Video, price £10.99; and the re-runs of Dr Who continue on Fridays at 6.50pm on BBC2.

As the press start to wake up and latch on to what we have been criticising the BBC for over the last few years, this article appeared in the January 23 edition of The Stage and Television Today

What's so Great about Tom Baker?

TOM BAKER in his debut story 'Robot' (c) BBC Video

THE RESULTS of the 1991 DWB readers' survey failed to surprise me in any way. There it was for all to see -- Tom Baker ... 43%. Yet another victory for Doctor number four. And as for my own personal favourite, the sadly underrated Doctor number seven -- also known as Sylvester McCoy -- a highly disappointing 4½%.

Now let's get one thing straight before we go any further: I am not disputing the validity of these results. 43% of DWB's readers (or at least, 43% of those who participated in the survey) voted for Tom Baker and Tom Baker is therefore the rightful winner of the favourite Doctor category. All I'd like to know is -- *why?*

It has long been my opinion that perhaps, just perhaps, dear old Uncle Tom doesn't quite deserve all the praise and hero-worshipping which he so often receives. I accept that he's a damn fine actor. I also accept that he made rather a good Doctor. But is he really worthy of so much acclaim, and was his contribution to the success of Doctor Who any greater than that of many other individuals to have worked on the programme? Should he be elevated to such heights and, more to the point, do all the actors to have played the Doctor since deserved to be dismissed as inferior in the way that they so often are?

Having given these questions great consideration over the years, I have come to the conclusion that there are two major reasons for Tom's great success. The first is a very basic one: quite simply, he was in the right place at the right time.

Tom became the Doctor in 1974 when, it must be said, the programme was being produced to a consistently high standard. Is it any wonder he was so successful when the stories themselves were of such a great quality? The programme improved more and more with the perfect combination of Philip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes, seen by many as the programme's greatest producer and script editor/writer. Of course, to the general public, producers and writers are just words on a screen and the man who got all the credit for Doctor Who's high profile at the time was dear old Tom. How could he lose? Tom has himself described the role of the Doctor as 'actor-proof', and at the time it probably was. Add to this the fact that he stayed for seven years and it's no wonder he's seen as the best Doctor! Surely there are dozens of talented actors who could have assumed the role at the same time and walked away with it all in much the same way?

Now ask yourself -- what if Tom had only played the role for three years? What if Jon Pertwee had stayed on for seven? And what would have happened if Sylvester McCoy had become the Doctor in 1974 and Tom hadn't taken over until 1987? Who would be the most popular Doctor in those scenarios? Tom Baker? I doubt it!

The second reason for Tom's success lies, I feel, with the changing nature of Doctor Who fans themselves. Fandom was less sophisticated in the 1970s and had a greater tendency to accept the programme for what it was. There were fewer fanzines and considerably less communication between individual fans. As a result, there was less criticism and more appreciation. Any slagging-off was directed at individual stories such as *The Deadly Assassin*, and it would probably not have occurred to most fans to suggest that the actor playing the Doctor was in any way unsuitable. After all, if you didn't like the Doctor, how could you be a Doctor Who fan?

Doctors five, six and seven arrived under very different circumstances. Fandom had matured and become much more critical. It became a fashion of sorts to be as negative about the programme as possible. The fourth Doctor was so firmly rooted in people's minds that his successors had little real opportunity to prove themselves. What's more, Davison, Colin Baker and McCoy all had to work under one single producer -- the *same* producer in all three cases -- whereas Tom had four.

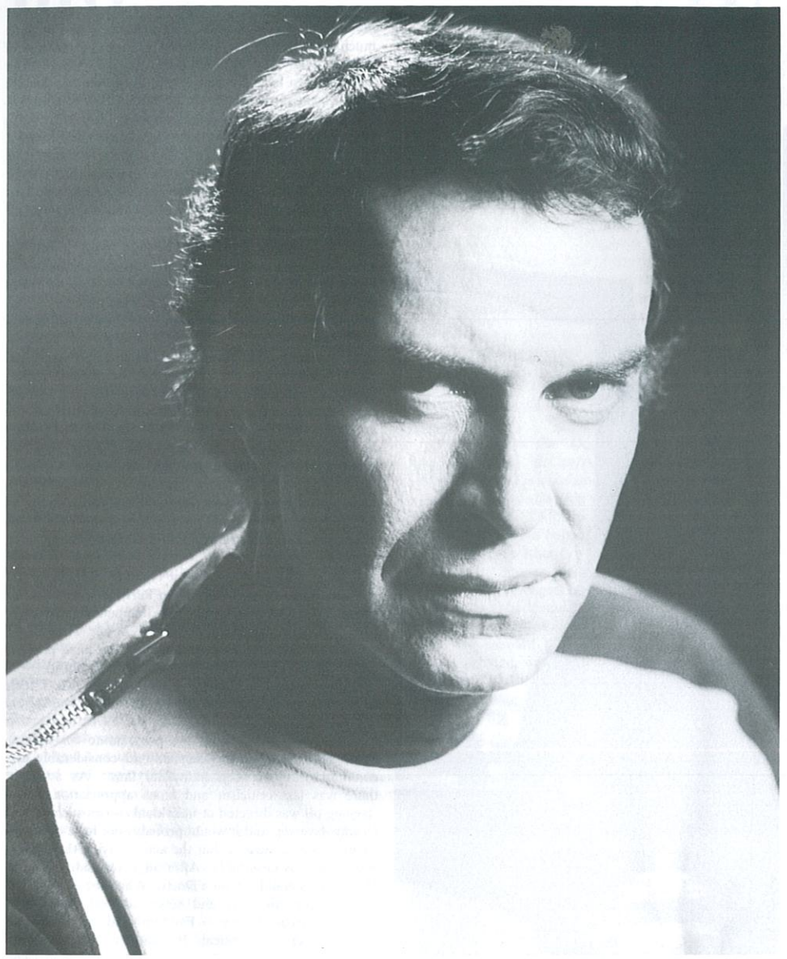
Sylvester McCoy got perhaps the worst deal of all. Many fans refused to accept him from the start and certain areas of the national press felt much the same way. Other factors, such as the 14 episode seasons and the mighty opposition of Coronation Street, meant that he was greatly handicapped. How could he be as successful as Tom when he wasn't given the same chance?

Despite this, of course, Sylvester still did remarkably well and his performance in Marvel's 1989 DWM poll -- in which he actually beat Mr Baker -- suggests that he was as successful as circumstances allowed.

By way of a conclusion, it is hard to form a judgement as to whether we will ever see the death of Tom Baker-mania. Fans still rave about hidden meanings in his Reeltime interview tapes (dare I suggest that there aren't any?) and DWM run three-part interviews with 'Tom's opinion on this' and 'Tom's opinion on that'. Perhaps if the programme returns with a new, improved format, the eighth Doctor may actually be given a genuine opportunity to steal Tom Baker's crown. Step forward, John Thaw ...?

IAN WHEELER

SCHLOCK WATCH: *SPACE 1999*



TAKE A poll among any selection of tv sci-fi enthusiasts, and one of the names that will come up high on the list of all-time worsts is Space: 1999. It's a series that has almost become a watchword for how not to make science fiction on television, and to say that you think it's good would be to invite howls of derision from the media community.

I certainly wouldn't say that I think it's good. But I do have a certain fondness for it. And that is the standpoint from which this article is written -- not to defend it to the hilt but to take a look at it, warts and all, and present a more balanced picture.

As is well known, Space: 1999 ran for two seasons, with a change in cast and production personnel in between. In actual fact, the changes in approach and content of the series are so major that they could almost be two different shows. When Space: 1999 is under discussion, it is almost invariably the first season that is talked about; the faults for which the series is so mercilessly pilloried are almost exclusively the province of the first season. The stiff-necked and uninteresting characters; the woolly scripting; the wildly abounding scientific inaccuracies (though when has science fiction television shown much of a penchant for scientific accuracy in any case?); the cold, clinical atmosphere, or rather lack of atmosphere; yes, they're all there. Furthermore, the first season displays other irritating characteristics. Episodes frequently end with the cast standing open-mouthed at 'the mysteries of the universe', rather than providing a sensible explanation, or indeed any sort of explanation, for what has happened. On a number of occasions, the moon and everyone on it is systematically blown to pieces, only to have everything miraculously restored at the end of the episode. Sometimes this is due to the intervention of aliens, who are invariably all-powerful, condescending, and remarkably po-faced.

I could go on, but I'm supposed to be finding good things to say, and while it's easy to generalise while criticising, the first season's good points are more readily visible when looking at particulars. *Alpha Child* deals with a story very similar to the ST:TNG episode *The Child*, but while the Next Generation is undoubtedly a superior series, *Alpha Child* is probably the better treatment, with the surrogate mother being understandably horrified by this rather grisly form of possession. *Force of Life*, though it suffers from a lack of clarity and one of those open-mouthed endings, is a strangely gripping tale of a crewman who is taken over by an alien force that seeks heat, and drives the man onwards even after his body is charred to a crisp. *Dragon's Domain* features an honest-to-goodness tentacled monster which sucks up its victim with the force of a tv-advertised vacuum cleaner, and then spits out the crunchy bits. *Another Time, Another Place*, although it suffers from a 'miraculous' ending, is the potentially intriguing tale of what happens when the Alphans travel through a time warp and meet a future version of themselves.

Best of all in my book is *The Troubled Spirit*, a would-be scientific ghost story about a man who is haunted by his own ghost, which is seeking vengeance for a death which has yet to happen. Okay, it doesn't make a lot of logical sense, and to be sure it has another of those open-mouthed endings, but it's a nice idea, pursued with an excellent spooky atmosphere. Perhaps this one stands out because mood pieces are rare in Space: 1999, a point which led some critical wits to remark that the moon lacked atmosphere.

Of course, there are also plenty of episodes that resist even the sympathetic viewer. *War Games* has some of those po-faced aliens who blow the moonbase to smithereens (until the end of the episode, of course, when to no one's surprise it is miraculously restored) in a sort of energy-intensive way of saying 'Not today, thank-you'; *Space Brain* conspicuously lacks a brain either before or behind the camera, and substitutes instead gallons of fire-fighting foam à la *Fury from the Deep*; *The Testament of Arkadia* is an intolerably pompous variant on the Shaggy God story; *Collision Course* is so obfuscatory as to be incomprehensible. The episode *Black Sun* is frequently quoted as being typical of what is wrong with the series, but in fact this is not quite true; it is actually an amalgam of all the show's worst failings, and as such merits a line or two. The plot, such as it is, finds the moon approaching a 'black sun' (a black hole, presumably), so the population is evacuated in a fleet of Eagles while Koenig and Bergman remain behind under the Professor's patent forcefield (though how a forcefield is supposed to protect you while going through a black hole is left to the viewer's bewildered imagination). Anyway, our two heroes undergo vaguely metaphysical experiences before the moon pops out from the far side of the black hole like a cork from a bottle. Unfortunately this means that the Eagles are stranded thousands of light years away ... but no, there they are anyway. The episode concludes that the Alphans have been saved by the direct personal intervention of God, thus establishing the writer's cop-out to beat all writer's cop-outs.

So much for the first season. The considerable changes made for the second year of the show were partly

ABOVE (left to right): Barbara (Dr Helena Russell) Bain, Martin (Commander John Koenig) Landau and Barry (Professor Bergman) Morse. (Below) A "terrifying space creature" from Season 2's 'The Beta Cloud'

a consequence of the parting of the ways for Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, and partly a response to the critical panning it had already received. There was a perceived need to streamline the series, to do away with the woolly quasi-mysticism, and to introduce more down-to-earth (no pun intended) action. For better or worse, Anderson brought in Fred Freiberger, who had produced the third season of Star Trek, to take over the series.

And down to earth it came. Gone were the would-be lofty plots, the half-baked intellectualising, the sententious mutterings about the mystery of the universe. In its place, Freiberger put action adventure, lots of it -- running and jumping, firing lasers, fast-moving plots. Monsters of the man-in-a-suit variety, which the first season had ostentatiously shunned, positively jostled for space on the screen, some amusingly being recycled from one episode to another. Open-mouthed endings were replaced by light-hearted tag scenes.

The cast also underwent changes. Out went truculent Prentis Hancock and Spock-like Clifton Jones. Out, unfortunately, went Barry Morse, who was clearly the best thing about season one, and who probably remembered an urgent appointment elsewhere as soon as his contract was up. Elfin Zienia Merton stayed, as did salt-of-the-earth cobber Nick Tate, and in came cheery Tony Anholt and Catherine Schell, with a funny make-up job to indicate her status as Alpha's resident alien. Maya comes with the ability to transform herself into any kind of life-form, irrespective of size, sex or physical configuration, a trick that would seem to be more at home in the Arabian Nights than in a science fiction series.

And amazingly enough, it works. Shorn of the prententious philosphising, brought down to the level of a Saturday morning cartoon, Freiberger's version of the show is great fun. It is undemanding, not to be taken seriously, and surprisingly entertaining.

Naturally enough, some episodes are better than others. Probably the best of the lot is the first episode of the two-parter *The Bringers of Wonder*, in which the Moonbase is visited by a shipload of gelatinous beings with the ability to appear in the guise of old friends from Earth; only Koenig, who has previously received the proverbial bump on the head, sees them as they really are, and of course everyone concludes that he's losing his marbles, so that he's soon tied down on a medical trolley for the aliens to gloop over. (It has to be admitted that the second part fails to fulfil this promise, jettisoning all the well built-up suspense and resolving instead into a series of extended action set-pieces, but if watched separately, the first part still delivers the goods.) At the other end of the scale is Pip and Jane Baker's contribution, *A Matter of Balance*, in which the universe is invaded by an anti-matter race (well, Stuart Wilson in a bald head and gold lamé jockstrap actually), and which readers of DWB will not be surprised to learn makes no sense at all.

The publicised attempt to make the characters seem more human, after the icy performances of season one, is a definite damp squib. The cast smile at each other more, but the characterisations are pure formula, and the Alphans remain two-dimensional; what is more important is that believable characters matter less in the new lightweight, action-orientated format.

Interestingly, considering Freiberger's background, the show does take on more Star Trek-like characteristics. The tendency to produce stories in a Star Trek mould had been present even in the first season (*Mission of the Darians*), but as the second season progresses, it looks increasingly as if Alpha had become a giant moon-shaped Enterprise with Kirk and co arbitrarily substituted by Koenig and his crew; there is even an episode entitled *The Immunity Syndrome*, for no good reason that I have ever noticed.

So there you have it -- Space: 1999 is worth revisiting. The first season is prententious, clinical, irritating, but not all bad; the second is brightly coloured comic strip, unintelligent but fun. Both versions have to be enjoyed for their flaws rather that despite them, rather in the way that one watches films like House of Dracula. Approach it with an attitude of amused tolerance and you may enjoy it after all.

DAVID SCOTT

BLAKE'S 7 Cassette 17

WELL, half-way through season three already and Blake's 7 video seems to be flashing by. Tape 17 presents us with two of the outright finest episodes the series offered. If you only buy one Blake tape, make sure it's this one. *Rumours of Death* is acclaimed all over everywhere. More on that later. **Children of Auron**, on the other hand, has been rather overlooked, quite unjustly. This may in part be due to the fact that it is one of those mysterious-aliens-take-over-Cally stories with which season three is famously overpopulated. As such episodes go, however, it has the edge on others by virtue of being also a Cally homecoming story. The aliens in question are, as the title gives away, Cally's own people, with whom a meeting was inevitable from the moment they were first mentioned two years earlier.

Children of Auron is a complicated episode, with several different plotlines meshing together. Roger Parkes (who had written the abysmal *Voice from the Past* in season two) had clearly been taking lessons from his script editor, who was a dab hand at cramming his scripts with separate ideas and finding a way to link them up. Another attempt by Servalan to capture the Liberator, her desire to breed, a conflict between two officers under her and the estrangement of Cally from her people are all woven together, plus several other stories as well. One of these, ongoing in this season and the one which belatedly and, for some, unwelcomely followed it, is that of the attempt by Servalan to rebuild an empire after the war with the Andromedans. The previously neutral planet of Auron is one of her targets. In a nice bit of continuity it is mentioned that the Clonemasters seen in *Weapon* are no more, and so the Auron process of asexual reproduction will be a useful replacement. Servalan's sudden desire to have sprogs is not rationalised, and her desire to have them asexually makes the mind boggle. Scope for a character study there, methinks. Perhaps she realised that Avon was never going to get into bed with her ...

Andrew Morgan directs his only Blake episode in fine style. Lots of concrete locations and models get blown to smithereens, but the whole thing is spoiled at the end by a Star Trekkian tee-hee-hee scene which, if memory serves, also blighted Roger Parkes' previous script. Michael Troughton plays a hapless scout ship captain and Ronald Leigh Hunt will be a familiar face.

As an aside, viewers will notice that this is another of those episodes where the crew have their bracelets taken and someone else has to go down with spares. Their supply of equipment must be getting rather low by now.

Children of Auron lays the foundations for the plot of the episode which follows it. In the previous season's *Countdown* we met a character called Del Grant, who believed that Avon had variously murdered, betrayed or abandoned his sister Anna. In fact, Avon had loved her and was at least as cut up about her death as Del was. Now, for whatever reason, he has suddenly decided to seek out and kill the man he believes was responsible: 'notorious thug, name of Shrinker' as Tarrant puts it. The distress call from Auron diverts him from this, much to the relief of Cally who thinks it is a lousy idea. Nevertheless in between that episode and this, Avon gets back to the point and **Rumours of Death** opens with him in a Federation interrogation unit, holding out until Shrinker is assigned to the case.

It is curious if not improbable that between the time of his arrival and the arrival of Shrinker even in a decimated Federation (*Rumours of Death* continues the Servalan empire building plot with a proposed meeting of new world leaders), Avon would not have been identified by some other means that him telling them. However, eventually Avon learns from Shrinker that responsibility for Anna's death lies elsewhere and so he hops off to find Servalan in the hope of enlightenment. He gets it. Anaa is still alive and has managed what Blake never did -- to topple Servalan.

Rumours of Death is rightly rated very highly by Blake fans but is -- outrageous assertion coming up -- let down by its principal player. Paul Darrow is simply not a good enough actor to cope with the intensity of some of the episode's dialogue, particularly the conversation with Anna where he discovers that she was actually a Federation agent 'running him' throughout their relationship -- the time of the legendary computer fraud. (That said, Darrow is nowhere near as bad as in some of what followed; we should count our blessings.) So while the episode could have been brilliant, we must settle for it being merely very good.

Since we mentioned dialogue we may as well mention there is an awful lot of tremendous stuff in Rumours of Death. Tarrant and Avon find Servalan beaten and chained and Avon asks: 'What happened? Did you murder your way to the wall of an underground room?' 'It's an old wall Avon; it waits. I hope you don't die before you reach it,' Servalan replies. Boucher was wasted on this series.

More learned observers can confirm whether or not the house in *Rumours of Death* is the same as that in *Day of the Daleks*, but it looks a lot like it.

Fiona Cumming directed only two Blake's 7 episodes, this and the next one, *Sarcophagus*. She was blessed. She must also have cottoned on to the thing with the teleport bracelets, as there are hardly any in the rack here. It is probably as well that the Liberator was destroyed at the end of the season as they would have started having to land it.

And that would have looked silly.

PETER LINFORD

THUNDERBIRDS Go To The Movies

ANTHONY CLARK looks back at the two feature films inspired by Gerry Anderson's cult series.

THUNDERBIRDS' move from small to big screen must have seemed a logical enough step at the time. The TV series was, after all, as popular as any of its day and had created a mania as all-pervasive as that generated by Dr Who and the Daleks. If television's time traveller could consider the transition into the cinema, then why couldn't the Tracey family.

The result of this thinking was the action-adventure movie *Thunderbirds Are Go*. It was planned to embody everything that had made the series popular, but bigger, better and louder. United Artists believed they had a major box-office success on their hands as the small-screen counterpart was riding high in both popularity and merchandising spin-offs, and the movie industry as a whole felt that *Thunderbirds Are Go* would be one of 1966's major contenders. After the film's preview someone at the bar suggested to Gerry Anderson that his film would be as popular as the then current James Bond movie and at the time nobody doubted the truth of this prediction. It was therefore a real shock when the film failed to achieve in the way it had been predicted. Flop may be too great a word for how *Thunderbirds Are Go* performed, but considering the hype, it was a failure ... but why?

No expense had been spared on the film's production. The main Zero-X model cost £2,500. Lady Penelope's famous pink Rolls Royce a further £2,000, and one of her ladyship's real mink coats £60. A 70-piece orchestra produced the film's excellent score by Barry Gray, and a twenty-eight strong visual effects team worked on three stages to bring to life the explosions, miniature cars and planes. If numbers equal quality then *Thunderbirds Are Go* should have been nearly faultless. In fact, the film was a very good production, with a strong plot, first-class visuals, and tight, fast direction and pacing. Even by today's hi-tec standards, the film looks a well-rounded and accomplished piece of big-screen fantasy -- and you rarely see the strings! It is no small accolade that twenty-five years on, most of the designs look not only as futuristic but also as believable as they ever did, and much of the dialogue and writing is very 'adult', while the characterisations are far more credible than the limits of strings and plastic would suggest. I can find little to fault the film as a representation of its television counterpart.

My one major quibble with the finished product is the bizarre fantasy sequence in Alan's dream. I am certain that it must have been an enjoyable thing to have planned and executed but it adds little to the film other than a certain period kitsch. However, the choice of the evergreen Cliff Richard was a happy accident as he is still a chart success today. New viewers coming to the film for the first time will therefore have no problems identifying the man and his band, even if he is introduced as Cliff Richard Junior -- an unlikely event given the singer's attitude to sex.

No one could understand why the film failed to achieve its predicted targets, although years later Gerry Anderson suggested that people possibly couldn't identify the television programme with its cinema counterpart: people don't go to their local Odeon to watch TV. However, at the time it was considered worth another attempt at bringing Thunderbirds to the big screen, and United Artists put up the money for a sequel, *Thunderbird Six*.

This time, much of the drama and action was replaced with a character-driven plot, although fantastic machines and a cliff-hanger ending were an essential element to the film's construction. The other major difference between the two films was their overall tone. Whereas *Thunderbirds Are Go* had been treated as a serious drama, *Thunderbird Six* set its sights on a greater reliance on humour and whimsy. This attempt to create something different might have worked if it had been handled by actors, but the limits of puppets was tested to destruction, and I think the film demonstrates that there is only so far you can take their characterisation. Marionettes and slapstick are not comfortable bed-fellows. The reduced level of spectacle also diminishes the film to the level of one of the show's TV episodes, thus negating the benefits of transferring the series to the cinema.

The real proof of this is the video releases. *Thunderbirds Are Go* loses a lot of its spectacle when robbed of its wide-screen image, while *Thunderbird Six* is far less affected by its reduction. A Dutch release of the first film, some eight years ago, was presented in a wide-screen format and I vainly hoped that UK releases would follow the same style. However, both movies make regular cinema appearances, even if their prints are now a little worn and faded, and are well worth seeing in their intended format.

The one thing the passage of the years has diminished is the impact of colour and clarity. At the time of the films' release, Thunderbirds fans would have only seen their series in black and white, and on 405-line TVs. Television technology has moved on in leaps and bounds since then, and the current re-runs, transmitted from new film prints since god-knows-when, is the best that Thunderbirds has ever been seen, with the exception of the films' initial releases.

In box-office terms, both films were relegated to the failures league, but you should not let the vagaries of cinema goers twenty-five years ago dissuade you from giving them a try. Even if you don't particularly like the series, *Thunderbirds Are Go* stands on its own merits as a well-crafted, exciting disaster movie with a pleasant period feel and well-directed action. The climax to the movie is sufficiently gripping to make even the most cynical of viewers forget that it's all being done with puppets.

It would be nice to think that once BBC2 finishes running all 32 episodes of the Thunderbirds series, it will move on to screen both the films -- perhaps even in a letterbox format to show them for their full effect. Here's hoping ...

WITHOUT WALLS
Channel 4, 14th January 1992

IT'S AN odd phenomenon, but the people who make television often seem to dislike it and give the impression that they're determined to trivialise it. Perhaps it's a defence mechanism, designed to protect them from feelings of guilt when they produce trash. That's surely the case where people like Noel Edmonds and Amanda De Cadenet, who never miss a chance to stress that they 'never watch television' as 'it's all such rubbish', are concerned. But another example of this attitude is the tendency of television programmes about television to talk about *anything* but the programmes. Talk about the fans ('What a bunch of loonies'), talk about the sociological significance of the medium ('And so, we can see that this programme's appeal is based on the simple-minded desire of the ordinary people to find some means of escape from their dull lives ...'), redub it with silly voices, and if all else fails get Terry Wogan to interview the stars, but for god's sake don't talk about the programme itself. People might think you were taking it seriously, and then what would happen to your street cred?

That's why Without Walls' feature on the Avengers (Channel Four, 14th January) was such a refreshing change. You got the impression that Paul Madden's production team had actually watched The Avengers *before* they were told to make the programme, and that they'd liked it! If so, it would be appropriate, as one of the interviewees put The Avengers' success down to genuine, and rare, enthusiasm for television amongst *its* production team.

Somehow this programme managed to avoid all the traps into which such documentaries usually fall (I imagine that this was due in part to the involvement of Dave Rogers, though equal credit should be given to the production team for actually bothering to consult him, in marked contrast to those responsible for TV Weekly's Avengers feature last year). There was no smart-alec presenter sneering at the material, and no attempt to impose some questionable interpretation on the subject (as was the case in BBC2's profile of fifties tv star Alma Colgan last August). While the programme did stress that The Avengers was ahead of its time in its presentation of women, this point was never allowed to divert attention from the series itself. The cutting together of comments from writers, actors and producers to form a narration by the people actually responsible for the series worked superbly, as did the practice of superimposing credit captions taken from the original episodes themselves (though I'd have preferred to have seen more of these -- it was difficult to fix a name to a face in some cases). The clips (taken, I believe, from *The Frighteners, The Gilded Cage, Second Sight, Dressed to Kill, Mandrake, Lobster Quadrille, The Town of No Return, A Touch of Brimstone, From Venus with Love, The Hidden Tiger, Epic, The Forget Me Knot, Invasion of the Earthmen, Look (Stop me ...), Noon Doomsday* and *Bizarre*, though I've probably missed some ...) had been chosen to illustrate the commentary rather than the other way round, and were exceptionally well-selected. All in all, the whole thing was superb, of interest both to casual viewers and hardened buffs.

I've a few complaints, of course. It would have been nice to have heard some mention of Dr King and Venus, of the 'first' Mrs Peel, and to have learned more about the abandoned Tara episodes (from which some footage is believed to survive ...). But these are petty grumbles compared with the delights we did get -- an admission from Brian Clemens that the final season contained some of the best scripts of the lot, and the first interviews (about the Avengers, at least) I've ever seen with people like Richard Bates and Leonard White.

In fact, it must be galling for the makers of *Resistance is Useless* that, just weeks after the transmission of what at the time seemed the best documentary ever made about a telefantasy series, Without Walls has come along and shown them how it should be done ...

ANTHONY BROWN

STINGRAY RETURNS!

STINGRAY is to be taken out of mothballs and will be shown in the 6.00pm Friday evening BBC2 slot from May, after 'Thunderbirds' ends its successful run.

Alan Yentob, Controller of BBC2, is hopeful that the adventures of Troy Tempest and mermaid Marina will also attract a new generation of viewers.

The 39 half-hour episodes - which start with the warning: "Stand by for action! Anything can happen in the next half hour" - were made for £1 million in 1964, directly preceeding **Thunderbirds** in order of Gerry Anderson productions.

A spokesperson for BBC2 said recently: We had an option to buy **Stingray** when we puchased **Thunderbirds**. If it works, we could well look at **Captain Scarlett,"** which would not materialise until early in 1993 after **Stingray** eventually closes its 39-episode run.

VIDEO NEWS

THE RATE at which ITC are releasing their videos has accelerated with the issuing of new batches of tapes in February, March, April and May. This shows the confidence that ITC have in the market for television nostalgia, as exhibited by the popularity of THUNDERBIRDS on BBC2 and TV Heaven on Channel 4.

Mid March sees the addition of five more titles to ITC's ever expanding catalogue of titles.

WILLIAM TELL: THE LEGEND BEGINS
ITC 0381 £14.99

THE ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM TELL was ITC's attempt to make the Swiss seem interesting, and this double cassette pack does just that as hunky Conrad Phillips chases around the Swiss Alps (really Snowdonia) beating up the occupying Austrian forces in six selected episodes from this 1959 series. The episodes are 'The Emperor's Hat' (the pilot in which Tell shoots the apple off his son's head), 'The Hostages', 'The Assassins', 'The Boy Slaves', 'Landslide' and 'The Raid'. Each thirty-minute episode is full of camp action as Tell - together with his very blond wife, Hedda, and his right hand man, The Bear - runs rings around the Austrian tyrant and glutton, Landburgher (and large fries) Gessler. It's great fun, even if the theme song isn't as good as "Robin Hood, Robin Hood...etc."

THE PERSUADERS
ITC 2301 £10.99

THE PERSUADERS
ITC 2302 £10.99

If there was a big budget television series with really big name stars it was THE PERSUADERS. This was the ultimate is television charm and sophistication, a real classic. It starred Tony Curtis and Roger Moore, whose names appeared above the opening credits simply as "Curtis and Moore". It featured really cool locations like Monte Carlo and London, lots of really cool girls in dresses with plunging necklines and lots of fast cars and fist-fights. Okay, I was only young at the time, but on second viewing this series has lost none of its polish.

The pilot episode, 'Overture', appears on the first tape, and it is also featured during the TV Heaven season. There was some doubt about this episode being released by ITC due to a rights problem, but it serves as a nice introduction to the characters of Lord Brett Sinclaire and Danny Wilde as they are manipulated by Judge Fulton (Laurence Naismith). Look out for the catchy song by Tony Hatch and Jackie Trent as the two playboys race their cars around the streets of Monaco. The second episode on the tape is the well thought of 'The Old, The New and The Deadly', which features three classic ITC ingredients: Derren Nesbit hamming it up, Patrick Troughton putting on a ridiculous mid-European accent, and a load of ex-Nazis from the job lot Lord Grade bought from an army surplus store at the end of World War II.

The second tape features Joan Collins in 'Five Miles to Midnight', as she attempts to get from Rome to New York with the help of our two heroes and the hindrance of the mafia. This is a typical example of Terry Nation's script writing for the company although, surprisingly, it features no characters called Tarrant. The second episode, 'Take Seven', sees Brett and Danny helping out when a dispossessed damsel in distress requires their services to dislodge a cuckoo in the family nest.

FIREBALL XL5: VOLUME I
'Planet 46', Hypnotic Sphere',
'Planet Plantonia', 'Space Magnet'
ITC 1051 £8.99

FIREBALL XL5: VOLUME II
'The Doomed Planet',
'Planet Man from Space',
'The Sun Temple', 'Space Immigrants'

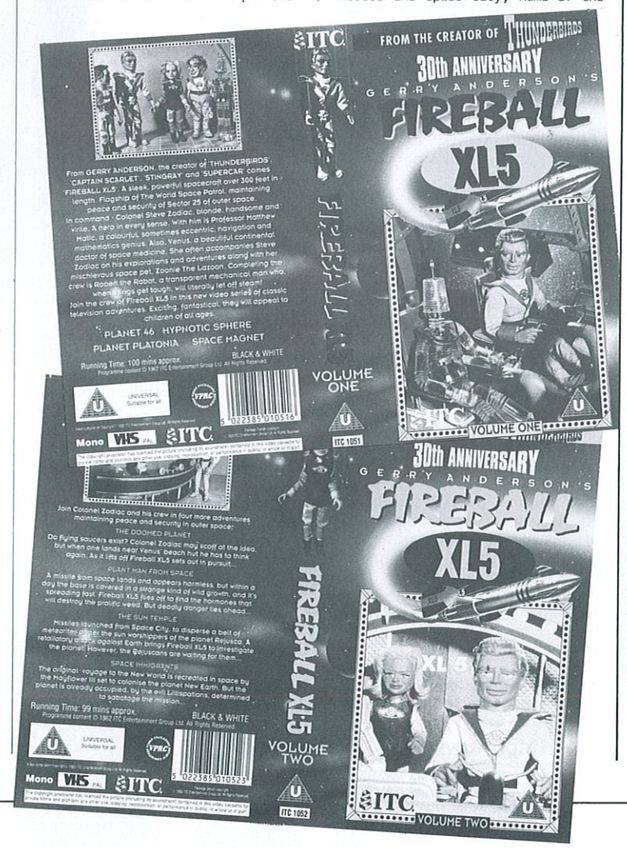
FIREBALL XL5 was Gerry Anderson's first full blown attempt at a space-age series, and although in some points it reaches its limits technically, the characterisations and humour in the series bring it through with flying colours. The eight episodes feature aliens such as the evil Lillispatians, the crazy Rejuscans, the Subterrains and Mr. and Mrs. Space Spy, all of whom want to do really nasty things to our heroes and Space City, home of the fantastic space ship, Fireball XL5. The star of the show is Steve Zodiac, cool, debonair and an all round great guy, but in a crisis he proves that even fibreglass heroes can sweat. This series is full of wonderful regular characters who form a real family, from the sultry Venus to the irritating Lazoon, Zoonie.

If you didn't have a chance to record this memorable flight of fancy during its last outing in the early eighties, now is your chance to relive some magic moments. "Okay Venus...let's go!"

April sees the release of two volumes of THE CHAMPIONS, another two tapes of SPACE: 1999 episodes, and volume threes of both SUPERCAR and THE SAINT. More details next issue, together with details of other planned releases.

ANTHONY McKAY

*BBC VIDEO are preparing to release season two of RED DWARF in March, in a similar format to season three which came out last year. HITCH HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY will finally be available in July - Douglas Adams' new book is titled 'Mostly Harmless' - along with THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, which appeared on BBC1 in the early eighties.


ITC
FROM THE CREATOR OF THUNDERBIRDS
30th ANNIVERSARY
GERRY ANDERSON'S
FIREBALL
XL5
From GERRY ANDERSON, the creator of THUNDERBIRDS, CAPTAIN SCARLET, STINGRAY and SUPERCAR comes FIREBALL XL5. A sleek, powerful spacecraft over 300 feet in length. Flagship of The World Space Patrol, maintaining peace and security in sector 25 of outer space.
In command - Colonel Steve Zodiac, blonde, handsome and virile. A hero in every sense. With him is Professor Matthew Matic, a colourful, somewhat eccentric, navigation and mathematics genius. Also, Venus, a beautiful continental doctor of space medicine. She often accompanies Steve Zodiac on his exploratory and adventure along with her mischievous space pet, Zoonie The Lagoon. Completing the crew is Robert the Robot, a transparent mechanical man who, when things get tough, will literally let off steam!
Join the crew of Fireball XL5 in this new video series of classic television adventures. Exciting, fantastical, they will appeal to children of all ages.
PLANET 46 HYPNOTIC SPHERE
PLANET PLATONIA SPACE MAGNET
Running Time: 100 mins approx
BLACK & WHITE
VOLUME ONE
ITC 1051
5 022385 010514
Join Colonel Zodiac and his crew in four more adventures maintaining peace and security in outer space:
THE DOOMED PLANET
Do flying saucers exist? Colonel Zodiac may scoff at the idea, but when one lands near Venus beach hut he has to think again. As it lifts off Fireball XL5 sets out in pursuit...
PLANT MAN FROM SPACE
A missile from space lands and appears harmless, but within a day the base is covered in a strange kind of wild growth, and it's spreading fast. Fireball XL5 fires off to find the harmones that will destroy the prolific weed. But deadly danger lies ahead...
THE SUN TEMPLE
Missiles launched from Space City, to disperse a belt of meteorites, set off the sun worshippers of the planet Belyaco. A retaliatory attack against Earth brings Fireball XL5 to investigate the planet. However, the Belyacons are waiting for them...
SPACE IMMIGRANTS
The original voyage to the New World is recreated in space by the Mayflower II set to colonise the planet New Earth. But the planet is already occupied, by the evil Lillispatians, determined to sabotage the mission...
Running Time: 99 mins approx
BLACK & WHITE
VOLUME TWO
ITC 1052
5 022385 010521
FIREBALL XL5

BRIEFLY...

DAVE ROGERS has relaunched Stay Tuned, 'The Avengers' fan magazine.

ANDREW PIXLEY has pulled out of his involvement with Virgin's planned definitive book on 'Blake's 7' (see DWB#97), fuelling fears that the project may now be dropped.

CHANNEL 4 have rejigged their TV Heaven schedule to such an extent that the guide published last issue can no longer be guaranteed to be accurate. The 'Avengers' episode to be shown on February 15th will now be 'The Gilded Cage' instead of 'November Five'.

AMERICAN producer J. Michael Straczynski has announced plans for a new syndicated science fiction series to premiere in the States in Autumn of this year, entitled Babylon 5. It will be set on a space station lying on the boundaries between five different planetary alliances, only one of which contains humans. A pilot film has been written and Straczynski - whose project for a new V miniseries was scrapped by Warner Brothers as not economically feasible after scripts were written - has asked a number of science fiction writers to submit storylines, including Walter Koenig. No casting has been done as yet, but a technical staff is being assembled which includes some former employees of Jim Henson and Industrial Light and Magic (the Terminator II people).

SIX OF ONE, the 'Prisoner' appreciation Society, have announced dates for future conventions. Portmeiricon '92 will be held over the weekend of August 21-24 at the Welsh village made famous by the series. Details from Six of One, PO Box 60, Harrogate.

Octocon '92, the 3rd Irish National SF convention, is on October 16-19 at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dublin. Details from Octocon '92, 30 Beverley Downs, Dublin 16, Ireland.

The Adventurers Convention - which pays homage to such series as 'The Saint', 'Randall & Hopkirk', 'The Prisoner', 'Danger Man', 'The Persuaders' etc.) has announced March 26-29 1993 as its tentative date, details c/o 10 Brook Avenue, Edgware, Middlesex.

USA NETWORK may be about to buy the much-delayed Sci-Fi Channel for $70 million. The deal will allow the cable channel access to the MCA and Paramount libraries, and will also provide Sci-Fi better leverage in getting into the already crowded cable systems. The current launch date is now Autumn 1992.

PR

dwb

Editorial address:
P.O.Box 1015, Brighton BN2 2YU

WELL, what can I say? On the eve of DWB's one hundredth issue, what better way to celebrate than with the most exciting news I've ever had the privilege to break! This issue reaches you a week earlier to enable us to be the FIRST to bring you this wondrous news of the return of 'The Tomb of the Cybermen', and rarely have I enjoyed compiling an issue of DWB so much! As you can see, some of the regular articles are rather jumbled around in order to give THE NEWS priority, which I hope you'll appreciate, and I look forward to hearing your views on 'the return'. At last we'll soon be able to witness, courtesy of BBC Video, whether this story really does live up to all of the hype surrounding it. As I suggested in last issue's letters pages, I am confident that it will, although we will lose the mystique surrounding this story all these years. That is the only benefit derived from the missing episodes, that they have developed a mystique all of their own, and is surely part of the attraction of being a fan. Each new find brings with it a rush of excitement on a par with the most joyful news you could ever hope to hear. It will be an intersting day if, and when, all episodes are eventually back in their rightful place. What, then, will we have to take centrestage in our thoughts...

Another landmark occurs next month with our one hundredth issue, which may be out slightly later than usual (so stop pestering those awfully nice staff at Forbidden Planet!). While some changes will have taken place by then, the new look won't come into full effect until DWB#101, which is the Spring Special. For next issue we'd like some letters from some of our longer-serving readers with their views about DWB through the years and how they think it has evolved, whether for the best or the worst. I look forward to hearing from you...

GARY

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TO ORDER NEXT ISSUE (DWB#100, April 1992): Send a crossed cheque/PO payable to DWB for £1.99 (£2.40 for card-reinforced first-class envelope) or US$4.95 to DWB#100, 5 Whitegate Gardens, Harrow-Weald, Middlesex HA3 6BW.
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STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE

RUMOURS and speculation about Paramount's plans to try to spin-off a series from the highly successful 'Star Trek: The Next Generation' have begun to crystalize, although no official announcements have been made outside of closed presentations to potential buyers.

Plans call to establish a series set in the same time frame as TNG but set on a starbase on the outskirts of Federation space, located near a wormhole that allows travel between galaxies. Apparently the station was built by aliens, but it is unclear if they abandoned it or turned it over to Starfleet. The location is supposed to ensure lots more aliens (while the lead character will be a man of action raising a 12-year-old son, the Spock/Data figure is to be a jelly-like creature which can assume humanoid forms, assumed to be based on using the Terminator II kind of computer-generated effect that is all the rage now, and begs the question of whether different actors will play the different forms).

The tentative title is **Deep Space Nine** and it is to air no earlier than January 1993. The strategy is to carry some of the lesser used TNG cast members over to this series, and to also allow some visits by the TNG crew to kick off the early episodes. Expected to be assigned to **Deep Station Nine** are Chief O'Brien and Ensign Ro, along with other cast members who are only briefly seen on TNG, such as Dr. Crusher's assistant.

S T T N G TO BE RENEWED?

What is unclear is whether Paramount will then still try to renew **The Next Generation** beyond next year's sixth season. This would involve costly contract renegotiations as the original contracts all expire after season six, yet TNG is achieving higher ratings every month - **The Unification** I and II received the highest TNG ratings to date - and seems to show no signs of declining in popularity. It may be that the new series will be a bargaining tool for contract negotiations, or it could be that Paramount is grooming it to be the TNG replacement after season six - although a number of fans are not pleased at the idea of a **Star Trek** without the Enterprise! As one said, "How can you boldly go if you are sitting on a space station?"

However, **Trek** co-executive producer Rick Berman assures, "This show will have more of an edge to it."

CONTROVERSY

Deep Space Nine has started an industry controversy because it is not the only science fiction series located on a space station that is slated to begin production for television. Producer J. Michael Stracynski has had a series he calls **Babylon 5** (see page 17) in development at Warner Brothers for several years, and its syndication for autumn broadcast is supposed to kickoff Warner's own bid to establish a network of independent stations. Straczynski has complained about the similarity of the ideas, and he points out that he did a "pitch" for **Babylon 5** at Paramount a couple of years ago when he was looking for a studio to buy into his project. Paramount supposedly liked the idea but turned it down because they already had **The Next Generation.**

Babylon 5 - a three-mile long space station located in neutral territory between five hostile space confederations, only one of which is human - will begin with a two-hour film which should go before the cameras in three or four months.

ST:VI TRAILS OFF

Despite performing far better at the box office than its predecessor, **Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country,** is starting to fade away at US cinemas. Debuting in pole position in its week of release, it has subsequently fallen to 3, 4, 7, 8 and 11th place, taking a relatively impressive $64.5 million by January 13th, just four million short of its break-even target, which will certainly be achieved with overseas royalties and video rights.

S T T N G SEASON 5 UPDATE

Paramount altered the TNG broadcast schedule for new episodes and extended the holiday season repeats by one week. **New Ground,** the episode in which Worf's foster mother returns to the Enterprise with his son Alexandra in tow, became the first new episode to air in 1992, going out the week of January 6. It was followed by a repeat of **Unification** I and II, and then six solid weeks of new material as America goes into the February "sweeps" period, a crucial time for TV ratings. These included **Hero Worship,** the episode directed by Patrick Stewart, during the week of January 27, followed by **Violations, The Masterpiece Society, Conundrum, Power Play** and **Ethics.**

In **Hero Worship,** a boy decides he wants to be like Data; **Violations** features flashback scenes of a young Beverley and Jean-Luc as an alien invades crew members' minds; **Masterpiece Society** deals with a "perfect" planet that finds itself in conflict with the Enterprise; **Conundrum** involves memory losses that have the crew behaving strangely - Riker and Ro suddenly find each other attractive!; **Power Play** sees alien fugitives taking hostages in Ten Forward; and **Ethics** involves a medical crisis for Worf and a surprise appearance.

Episodes filmes in January included **The Outcast** - in which Riker's taste for casual liasons gets him into trouble again - and **Duelling Q's** with John De Lancie. Also scheduled to shoot at the end of January is **Cause and Effect,** an episode in which the crew feel that they are repeating actions over and over again. It was directed by Jonathan Frakes.

Kathleen Toth

RIGHT: Still boldly going, the Season Five crew of 'Star Trek: The Next Generation', but for how long... LEFT: Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner appearing together in Minneapolis to plug 'ST:VI' during its opening week, and proof that Nichelle Nichols is the best-preserved of the original crew!